

A STUDY OF THE REIGN OF THE FIFTH  
FĀṬIMID IMĀM/CALIPH AL-ʿAZĪZ BILLĀH

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## DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work  
and is of my own composition.

Shainool Jiwa

To my family

- in love and gratitude

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## ABSTRACT

The fifth Fāṭimid Imām/Caliph, al-ʿAzīz billāh, is viewed in a number of primary sources as being the best of the Fāṭimid sovereigns. Yet, this particular Fāṭimid ruler has hitherto received little attention either from scholars in the Arab world, or in the West. This thesis seeks to remedy this neglect and aims to conduct a thorough study of the reign of al-ʿAzīz billāh.

After an initial survey of sources and a political overview of the reign of al-ʿAzīz, the thesis undertakes an analysis of his religious policies vis-à-vis his Muslim subjects and the ahl al-Kitāb. The relations of al-ʿAzīz with his three powerful neighbours - the Būyids and the ʿAbbāsids at Baghdad, the Byzantine Empire and the Umayyads of Andalusia - are then examined.

As a result of these investigations, al-ʿAzīz billāh emerges as an extremely competent, yet humane sovereign with whom even the most powerful potentates of his time, including the great ʿAqūd al-Dawla, sought to establish diplomatic relations.

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The system of transliteration of Arabic that has been adopted throughout this work is the one employed by the Encyclopaedia of Islam with the following modifications.

j	instead of	<u>dj</u>	for	ﺝ
kh	" "	<u>kh</u>	"	ﺥ
q	" "	ḳ	"	ق
ai	" "	ay	"	ﺀ
īy	" "	iyy	"	ﻲ

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- II : Fāṭimid-Umayyad Animosity
  - II i The Zīrid succession
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## ABBREVIATIONS

I ABBREVIATED TITLES OF THE PRIMARY SOURCESMOST OFTEN CITED IN THE THESIS

- Al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh = Al-Anṭakī, Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd al-Anṭakī. Ed. J. Kratchkovsky and A. Vasiliev, Patrologia Orientalis, XVIII, 5 (1924), 701-833; XXIII, 3 (1932), 349-520.
- Ibn al-Athīr = Ibn al-Athīr, 'Alī b. Muḥammad. Al-Kāmil fi'l-Ta'rīkh. Ed. C. J. Tornberg (Leiden, 1862) vols. VIII, IX.
- Ibn al-Dawādārī, Al-Durra = Ibn al-Dawādārī, Abū Bakr 'Abd Allāh b. Aibak, Kanz al-Durar wa Jāmi' al-Gurar, vol. VI: Al-Durra al-Fātimīya fī akhbār al-Dawla al-Fātimīya. Ed. S. D. Munajjid (Cairo, 1961).
- Ibn 'Idhārī, al-Bayān = Ibn 'Idhārī, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, Al-Bayān al-Mughrib fī akhbār al-Andalus wa'l-Maghrib. Ed. G. S. Colin and E. Lévi Provençal (Leiden, 1948-51).
- Ibn Khaldūn, al-'Ibar = Ibn Khaldūn, 'Abd al-Raḥmān. Kitāb al-'Ibar wa dīwān al-mubtadā' wa'l-khabar (Bulāq, 1867), 7 vols.
- Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt = Ibn Khallikān, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, Wafayāt al-A'yān wa Anbā' Abnā' al-Zamān. English trans. M. de Slane, Biographical Dictionary, 4 vols. (Paris, 1842-8). Re-edited by Iḥsān 'Abbās, 8 vols. (Beirut, 1968-).
- Ibn Miskawaih, Tajārib = Ibn Miskawaih, Kitāb Tajārib al-Umam. Ed. H. F. Amedroz (Oxford, 1921). English trans. D. S. Margoliouth, The Experience of Nations, (Oxford, 1922).
- Ibn al-Qalānisī, Dhail [Amedroz ed and Zakkar ed. respectively] = Ibn al-Qalānasī, Dhail Ta'rīkh Dimashq. Ed. H. F. Amedroz (Leiden, 1909). Re-edited by S. Zakkar (Damascus, 1983).
- Ibn Ṣairafī = Al-Ishāra, Abu'l-Qāsim. Kitāb al-Ishāra ilā man nāla al-Wizāra. Ed. A. Mukhlis (Cairo, 1964).
- Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Nujūm = Ibn Taghrī Birdī, Abu'l-Maḥāsin, Al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣr wa'l-Qāhira. Ed. W. Popper (Berkeley, 1909), vol. II, part 2.



- Ibn Zāfir, al-Duwal = Ibn Zāfir, Kitāb Akhbār al-Duwal al-Munqaṭiʿa, the part dealing with the Fāṭimids edited by A. Ferré (Cairo, 1972).
- Idrīs, ʿUyūn = Idrīs, ʿImād al-Dīn. ʿUyūn al-akhbār wa funūn al-āthār fī dhikr al-Nabī al-Muṣṭafā al-Mukhtār wa Waṣīhi wa Alihi, vol. VI. Ed. M. Ghalib (Beirut, 1984).
- Al-Jawdhārī, Sīra = Al-Jawdhārī, Abū ʿAlī Maṣṣūr al-ʿAzīzī, Sīrat al-Ustādh Jawdhar. Ed. M. K. Ḥusain and A. H. Shaʿīra (Cairo, 1954). Trans. into French by M. Canard, Vie de l'Ustadh Jawdhar (Algeria, 1958).
- Al-Maqrīzī, Ittiʿāz = Al-Maqrīzī, Aḥmad b. ʿAlī, Ittiʿāz al-Ḥunafā' bi akhbār al-A'immat al-Fāṭimīyīn al-Khulafā'. Vol. I, ed. J. D. M. Shayyāl (Cairo, 1967).
- Al-Maqrīzī, Khiṭaṭ = Al-Maqrīzī, Aḥmad b. ʿAlī, Kitab al-Mawāʿiz wa'l-Iʿtibār bi dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa'l-āthār. (Būlāq, 1324 AH) 2 vols.
- Al-Rudhrāwārī, Dhail Tajārib = Al-Rudhrāwārī, Abū Shujāʿ, Dhail Kitāb Tajārib al-Umam. Ed. H. F. Amedroz and D. S. Margoliouth (London, 1921). Eng. trans. D. S. Margoliouth, Continuation of the Experience of Nations. (Oxford, 1921).

## II Abbreviations for reference works and periodicals frequently referred to in the thesis

<u>AI</u>	<u>Annales Islamologiques</u>
<u>AS</u>	<u>Arabian Studies</u>
<u>BRISMES</u>	<u>British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin</u>
<u>BS</u>	<u>Byzantine Studies</u>
<u>BSOAS</u>	<u>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</u>
<u>CHI</u>	<u>Cambridge History of Islam. Ed. P. M. Holt, et. al., (Cambridge, 1970)</u>
<u>CMH</u>	<u>Cambridge Medieval History IV, Ed. J. M. Hussey, (Cambridge, 1966)</u>
<u>Colloque</u>	<u>Colloque internationale sur l'histoire du Caire 27 mars-5 avril 1969, (Germany, 1972)</u>
<u>E.I.<sup>1</sup></u>	<u>Encyclopaedia of Islam, I<sup>st</sup> edition (Leiden, 1936)</u>
<u>E.I.<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>Encyclopaedia of Islam, II<sup>nd</sup> edition (Leiden, 1960-)</u>
<u>IC</u>	<u>Islamic Culture</u>
<u>IJMES</u>	<u>International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies</u>
<u>JA</u>	<u>Journal Asiatique</u>
<u>JAH</u>	<u>Journal of African History</u>
<u>JAOS</u>	<u>Journal of the American Oriental Society</u>
<u>JBBRAS</u>	<u>Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society</u>
<u>JNES</u>	<u>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</u>
<u>JRAS</u>	<u>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</u>
<u>MW</u>	<u>The Muslim World</u>
<u>SI</u>	<u>Studia Islamica</u>
<u>WO</u>	<u>Die Welt des Orients</u>

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### I Survey of the Sources

A comprehensive review of the sources is an integral part of research. In a work of a historical nature, however, a survey of the sources assumes paramount importance. For it is a tool which enables the researcher to evaluate the information available to him as well as to determine its authenticity. A resurgence of academic interest in the Fāṭimids has to some extent helped to bridge the gaps in our knowledge of this dynasty. As with other dynasties of the Islamic period, Fāṭimid history has suffered from the fact that not all the major events or personalities of that dynasty have been researched at all, let alone studied in depth. This is not, however, the case for all aspects of Fāṭimid studies. As Lev has pointed out, there are many illuminating studies on the religious aspects of the Fāṭimid phenomenon. The social and economic aspects of Fāṭimid history, especially of the later Fāṭimids, are other areas which have received serious attention from some scholars.<sup>1</sup> Fāṭimid art and architecture have also been the focus of some recent, informative studies by art historians.<sup>2</sup>

The political history of the Fāṭimids is one area, however, which needs to be thoroughly researched, since a majority of the monographs on this dynasty are either outdated or uncritical in

their approach. There are, of course, works which are exceptions to this rule and which will be discussed further on in the survey. Nonetheless, the need to undertake meticulous research in the field of political history still remains.

As Lev has already produced a comprehensive survey of the primary sources and research literature available on the Fāṭimids, it seems futile to repeat the exercise here. The attention of the reader is particularly drawn to Lev's painstaking research on the identification and analysis of the works of tenth-century writers who were contemporary to the Fāṭimids, and those compiled by much later writers. The latter works are, nevertheless, very valuable as they often incorporate information from earlier works which are not, themselves, extant.<sup>3</sup>

In this thesis, then, the survey of sources will be limited to those which shed light on, directly or indirectly, the Fāṭimid Caliph al-ʿAzīz billāh. Moreover, all those works that were sufficiently well discussed by Lev will not be analysed here. There are, however, some sources that Lev did not mention. This is to be expected, as Lev's topic of research was different from that of the present thesis. Occasionally, Lev's evaluation of a particular work is at variance with my own opinion of it. In both these cases the sources concerned will be discussed and analysed. In addition, Lev did not pay sufficient attention to the Ismāʿīlī sources that are available. This chapter will attempt to redress this weakness in respect of the reign of al-ʿAzīz.



## I i Primary Ismāʿīlī Sources

Whilst historians of Ismāʿīlism, such as Ivanow, may be generally right in assuming that "Ismāʿīlism never developed a taste for historiography",<sup>4</sup> there are in the case of al-ʿAzīz at least four Ismāʿīlī works which have proved to be rather informative. Their value lies in the fact that they provide a contemporary Fāṭimid partisan's view of various events. Accordingly, they often incorporate in their works information which is not to be found in general historical works.

### I i 1 Contemporary Treatises

The first work that needs to be mentioned in connection with the reign of al-ʿAzīz is the Sīrat al-Ustādh Jawdhar.<sup>5</sup> These memoirs were written during the reign of al-ʿAzīz by a scribe<sup>6</sup> of the chamberlain of the fourth Fāṭimid Caliph, al-Muʿizz. The chamberlain, Ustādh Jawdhar, was of Slavic origins. He served the first four Fāṭimid Caliphs in various capacities. He did not reach Egypt, however, for he died on the way at Barqa in 363/973. Although the Sīra was written in al-ʿAzīz's time, no amendments were made in the text to adjust to the political realities of al-ʿAzīz's reign. From a historian's point of view, this is the strength of the Sīra. The work provides an intimate account, for instance, of the appointment of Amīr ʿAbd Allāh, the second son of al-Muʿizz as heir apparent - an event which a number of the other historians omit. It is true that the language and the style of

the Sīra are both geared to the extolling of the principal character, Ustādh Jawdhar. But in doing so, it also provides an historical insight into the key political issues of the time. For, besides being the chamberlain of al-Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>izz, Ustādh Jawdhar was also a close confidant of his.

The Dīwān<sup>7</sup> of al-Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>izz's eldest son, Tamīm,<sup>8</sup> is another work which is contemporary with the reign of al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz. Like the Sīrat Jawdhar, the Dīwān, too, provides insight into certain events within the Fāṭimid court, of which the other historians appear to be totally un<sup>ʿ</sup>ware. It sheds light on the crucial issue of succession; in particular, the reasons why Tamīm, though the first-born of al-Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>izz, was bypassed by the latter in favour of his second son <sup>ʿ</sup>Abd Allāh; and then by Nizār, who, upon his accession, adopted the title "al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz billāh". On a personal note, the Dīwān also provides information on the cordial relationship that existed between al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz and his elder brother Tamīm. The poet's verses composed on significant occurrences of al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz's reign, moreover, contribute to our knowledge of these events and the manner in which they were celebrated.

The Risāla ilā jama<sup>ʿ</sup>at ahl al-Rayy is a work written by the dā<sup>ʿ</sup>ī, Abu'l-Fawāris al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Mimādhī.<sup>9</sup> He was sent, in the time of al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz, to propagate the Ismā<sup>ʿ</sup>īlī da<sup>ʿ</sup>wa in Rayy. On his arrival there, however, he met with such hostility that he had to flee the town. It was then that he wrote the Risāla, addressed to the people of Rayy. The Risāla, consequently, provides a

contemporary account of the Ismāʿīlī mission in Rayy during the reign of al-ʿAzīz. Undoubtedly, the dāʿī's work offers a rather personal and emotional point of view. Nonetheless, the fact remains that it provides some first-hand information on the daʿwa in a particular area.

One of the works of Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm (or Muḥammad) al-Nīsābūrī, who lived during the reigns of al-ʿAzīz and al-Ḥākim, needs to be mentioned in this section. It is called al-Risāla al-Maujaza al-Kāfiya fī ādāb al-duʿāt.<sup>10</sup> The treatise deliberates on the hierarchical structure of the Fāṭimid daʿwa. It also provides an exposition on the qualities and functions of a dāʿī. The value of the work lies in the time when it was composed, for it is a portrayal of the daʿwa mechanism as it was understood and perhaps practised in the time of al-ʿAzīz.

The above survey of Ismāʿīlī literature contemporary with the time of al-ʿAzīz is by no means exhaustive. There were other, prominent people who wrote in this period, viz Jaʿfar b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman, Abu'l-Faraj Yaʿqūb b. Yūsūf b. Killis and Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī.<sup>11</sup> The focus of their writings is on non-historical subjects such as esotericism and jurisprudence. As a result, they do not contribute to this particular piece of research.

## I i 2 Later Writings

An important historical source that belongs to a much later period is the ʿUyūn al-Akḥbār wa Funūn al-Āthār.<sup>12</sup> Its author, ʿImād al-Dīn Idrīs (d. 872/1468), belonged to the Ṭayyibī Ismāʿīlī daʿwa circles in Yemen.<sup>13</sup> Idrīs could not have chosen to live in a place more conducive than Yemen for compiling his historical work, for it is well known that, after the fall of the Fāṭimid Caliphate in Egypt, Yemen became the repository of Fāṭimid literature. Idrīs's work consequently contains information that is based on the earliest of the Fāṭimid sources, a great number of which are not extant.

The overall value of the work notwithstanding, it must be admitted that for some of the political events of al-ʿAzīz's reign, Idrīs relies on standard Sunnī biographical and historical works such as Ibn Khallikān's Kitāb Wafayāt al-ʿAyyān<sup>14</sup> and Ibn al-Athīr's Kitāb al-Kāmil fi'l-Ta'rīkh.<sup>15</sup> In this aspect, then, his work makes no significant contribution. The other point that needs to be made concerning Idrīs's coverage of the reign of al-ʿAzīz is that the author shows a marked bias towards the Fāṭimids and against the ʿAbbāsids and the Umayyads of Spain. It must be borne in mind, however, that the tendency to take sides with one dynasty or another was quite common among historians of the medieval times, especially those that belonged to a particular religious group, as Idrīs did. The value of his work should not be underrated on that count alone, therefore.



### I i 3 Supplementary sources

The single, most prolific Ismāʿīlī writer whose historical works span the eras of the first four Fāṭimid sovereigns is al-Qāḍī Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nuʿmān.<sup>16</sup> The Qāḍī belonged to a learned family in Qairawān. It was in 313/925 that he began his long career at the Fāṭimid court. He was appointed to a variety of posts, such as the keeper of the palace library, judge of Tripoli and al-Manṣūriya, reaching the apogee of his career in the time of al-Muʿizz, in whose reign he also died in Jumādā II 363/March 974. The Qāḍī wrote on an impressive array of subjects. He is most renowned, however, for his works on Fāṭimid-Ismaʿīlī jurisprudence, of which he is regarded to be a key exponent. The wide range of the Qāḍī's literary output can be judged from the fact that Poonawala, in his Biobibliography of Ismaʿīlī Literature records sixty-two of his works.<sup>17</sup> Of these, eight deal with history, and are, therefore, of particular relevance to this piece of research. It must be admitted, however, that not all of the works of al-Nuʿmān are extant. Moreover, not all the historical writings are of an equal standard.

One particular historical work of his that needs to be reviewed <sup>al-Muʿizz</sup> here is the Kitāb al-Majālis li-dīn Allāh wa ʿan abā'ihī.<sup>18</sup> Stern states that this work of al-Nuʿmān "contains here and there precious pieces of information."<sup>19</sup> but, according to Lev:

even these grains of historical information are problematic ... [as] the information [in the work] is divorced from its historical context so that the previous circumstances and

subsequent ramifications of the events are not considered.<sup>20</sup> In my view, this is the very strength of the Majālis. It is when an author discusses the "previous circumstances" and "subsequent ramifications" that he begins to advocate his own opinion of the event. What the Majālis offers, instead, is a collection of, for instance, the correspondence between al-Mu<sup>c</sup>izz and the Byzantine governor, or between the Fāṭimid sovereign and other Islamic rulers, or with his own dā<sup>c</sup>īs. To be sure, the Qāḍī does not often mention the dates when these exchanges took place, but these dates can be ascertained from other contemporary sources. The usefulness of the Majālis lies in the fact that in it the Qāḍī presents a faithful account of what he witnesses. When studying Byzantine-Fāṭimid relations during the reign of al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz, for example, the Majālis provides excellent background material, in the form of correspondence exchanged between his predecessor and the Byzantine Emperor. The Qāḍī's account of Fāṭimid-Byzantine, or for that matter Fāṭimid-Umayyad, relations during his time, moreover, provides a useful insight into the official Fāṭimid viewpoint of these issues.

One other work that needs to be mentioned under this subsection is the Dīwān of Ibn Hānī' al-Andalusī.<sup>21</sup> This most celebrated poet of the Maghrib, known as "Mutanabbī al-Maghrib", began his career at the Umayyad court in Spain. He soon had to flee from there, however, because of his pro-Fāṭimid sympathies. He eventually arrived at the Fāṭimid court in North Africa, where he lived until his death, on his way to Egypt, in 362/973. The poet's first-hand

knowledge of Spain and North Africa and his personal awareness of the relations between the Fāṭimids and the Umayyads are two aspects of his work that make it a useful book to consult as background for one of the chapters of this thesis, namely "Fāṭimid Policies in the Maghrib under al-ʿAzīz billāh: Animosity with the Umayyads".

It may be appropriate to conclude the section on Ismāʿīlī sources by pointing the reader's attention to two reference manuals on Ismāʿīlī works in recent years: the Biobibliography of Ismāʿīlī Literature by I. K. Poonawala<sup>22</sup> and A Catalogue of Manuscripts in the Library of the Institute of Ismāʿīlī Studies.<sup>23</sup> Both these informative works enable the student of history to locate the Ismāʿīlī sources and to get a gist of their contents - a task that is rendered all the more useful as Ismāʿīlī sources are not as well-known and consequently, not as well utilised, as their Sunnī counterparts.

## I ii Non-Ismāʿīlī Primary Sources

### I ii 1 Eleventh-Century Writers

The Chronicle of Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Anṭakī is an extremely valuable eleventh century source which escaped Lev's attention and needs, therefore, to be discussed here.<sup>24</sup> Yaḥyā was a Melkite Christian born in Egypt in 380/990, during the reign of al-ʿAzīz. A physician by profession, Yaḥyā also possessed the skills of a

historian. Yaḥyā wrote his chronicle, Dhail al-Ta'rīkh as a continuation of the Nazm al-Jawdhār by the Alexandrian Patriarch Eutychius (d. 328-9/940), known also as Saʿīd b. Biṭrīq. The Dhail spans over a century, dealing with events between 324/936 and 425/1034, mainly in Syria, Egypt and the eastern zones of the Byzantine Empire. It also relates events concerning Iraq until 381/991.

Yaḥyā's Dhail is useful on a number of counts. It is one of the few eleventh-century Arabic historical writings to have survived in its original form today, while most of the other material contemporary with the Dhail has usually been abridged and incorporated into the works of subsequent writers. Secondly, the information that Yaḥyā provides is, as pointed out by Forsyth, factual and objective to an exceptional degree. Thirdly, Yaḥyā wrote on subjects that have generally been ignored by other historians. The greatest strength of the Dhail, however, is that it is an "unrivalled source of Byzantine-Arab political relations."<sup>25</sup> It consequently forms the backbone of the chapter on "Fāṭimid-Byzantine Relations during the Reign of al-ʿAzīz billāh". The work also provides vital information on the position of the Christian minorities in Islamic, particularly Fāṭimid lands. It is to be regretted, however, that whereas in the Dhail Yaḥyā provides a much more substantial coverage of al-Ḥākim and his Caliphate, he has relatively little to say on al-ʿAzīz.



Two other well-known eleventh-century writers whose works have yielded useful information for this thesis but who were not mentioned in Lev's survey are Ibn Miskawaih's Tajārib al-Umam<sup>26</sup> and al-Thaʿālibī's Yatīmat al-Dahr fī Maḥāsin ahl al-ʿAsr.<sup>27</sup> The usefulness of the Tajārib lies in the fact that Ibn Miskawaih (d. 421/1030) occupied an eminent position at the Būyid court. As a result, the Tajārib gives a first-hand account of Fāṭimid-Būyid relations, albeit presenting the Būyid view of it. It has consequently proved to be an important work for studying the relations between these two powerful dynasties during the Caliphate of al-ʿAzīz. Al-Thaʿālibī's Yatīma, on the other hand, sheds light on the literary talents of the Fāṭimid sovereign al-ʿAzīz. Al-Thaʿālibī (d. 429/1037-8) classifies al-ʿAzīz as one of the well-known literary personages of his time and even includes some of the poetical compositions of al-ʿAzīz in his biography.

## I ii 2 Historians of the Fourteenth Century

Lev has dealt extensively with the rest of the historians who are relevant to this piece of research. Only three eighth/fourteenth century writers, whose writings were, in all probability, beyond the scope of Lev's thesis, but which, nonetheless, are important for the present study, remain to be mentioned. Chronologically, the first of these works is Kitāb al-Bayān al-Mughrib fī (ikhtiṣār) akḥbār Mulūk al-Andalus wa'l-Mughrib by Ibn ʿIdhārī al-Marrākushī<sup>28</sup> (fl. 717/1312) and the second one is al-ʿIbar

wa'l-Mubtadā' by Ibn Khaldūn<sup>29</sup> (d. 808/1406). Both these works report at length on the Maghrib and Spain. They, therefore, provide valuable information on Fāṭimid policy in North Africa during the reign of al-ʿAzīz and also the latter's relations with the Umayyads of Spain.

The third and final work that ought to be mentioned in this survey of primary sources is al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣr wa'l-Qāhira by Abu'l-Maḥāsin Ibn Taghrī Birdī (d. 874/1470).<sup>30</sup> This work encompasses the history of Egypt from 20/641 to the author's own times. Notwithstanding the fact that the composition of the work postdates the reign of al-ʿAzīz by almost five centuries, nonetheless, in speaking of the latter's time Ibn Taghrī Birdī utilises sources that were contemporary to the Fāṭimids, but which are today not extant. The value of the Nujūm also lies in the fact that while it at times corroborates reports found in other primary sources of the Fāṭimids, such as Ittiʿāz al-Hunafā'<sup>31</sup> of al-Maqrīzī, at other times it provides information that is not available in other sources. The detailed information that the Nujūm imparts on Fāṭimid-Būyid relations in al-ʿAzīz's time is, for example, unmatched by any other extant sources.

# I iii Review of Research Literature

## I iii 1 Introduction

As Lev has already conducted a thorough survey of secondary sources on the Fāṭimids, it is pointless to repeat a similar exercise here. It would be much more worthwhile to provide, instead, a supplement and an update to Lev's work on published, present-day works on the Fāṭimids.

Another genre of material that will be reviewed in this section are the unpublished PhD theses that have been written in the last decade and which have proved to be particularly useful for this study. Admittedly, one does not generally come across a review of unpublished theses in a study such as this one. There are, in my opinion, however, some very good reasons for including a review of such works. The standard, albeit unvoiced maxim held in the academic world is that "if a work is of sound academic quality, it gets published". It follows then that those studies that do not get published are perhaps not of much academic value. Yet, nothing could be further from the truth. There may well be a number of reasons - which have no bearing on the academic worth of a work - for which it does not get published. Certainly, each of the theses included in this survey had a significant contribution to make to the present study on al-ʿAzīz.

I iii 2     Published Works

Mention must be made in this category of the corpus of literature on the Fāṭimids by well-known scholars such as Madelung,<sup>32</sup> Hamdani<sup>33</sup> and Halm,<sup>34</sup> whom Lev has perhaps inadvertently missed out in his review of research literature. Their works, in my opinion, make a significant contribution to our knowledge of the Fāṭimids. More recently, the articles of academics such as Lev, on the political, military, administrative and socio-economic aspects of early Fāṭimid rule in Egypt further adds to our knowledge of this dynasty.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, articles of art historians such as Bloom<sup>36</sup> and Williams<sup>37</sup> provide a useful and interesting insight into the fascinating world of Fāṭimid art and architecture.

In addition to the host of present-day writers mentioned by Lev, who have dealt with the Fāṭimids in Arabic, must be added some more names. Sayyid - for his important study of Fāṭimid source material<sup>38</sup> and his edition of the extant portion of al-Muṣabbiḥī's Ta'rīkh;<sup>39</sup> Kurd ʿAlī - who edited a book on predatory birds written by an author contemporary to al-ʿAzīz and dedicated to him;<sup>40</sup> al-Khoury - for his article on the Khizānat al-Kutub (the library of al-ʿAzīz);<sup>41</sup> Ghālib, for his general historical works on the Fāṭimids<sup>42</sup> as well as his critical edition of the Dīwān of Tamīm b. al-Muʿizz. Mention must also be made of the two modern biographers of al-ʿAzīz in Arabic - ʿAlī al-Kharbuṭlī<sup>43</sup> and ʿĀrif Tāmīr.<sup>44</sup> Both of these biographies, particularly the one by the



latter, share similar academic weaknesses in that they do not utilise the sources available on al-ʿAzīz critically. Very often, moreover, they do not acknowledge in their notes where they have derived the information that they have incorporated in their text on al-ʿAzīz.

Finally, the writings of Zāhid ʿAlī on the Fāṭimids, in Urdu, must be noted. The author wrote a two-volume work on Ta'rīkh Fāṭimiyīn Miṣr encompassing the reigns of all the Fāṭimid Caliphs.<sup>45</sup> He also included in this work socio-economical, military, administrative and architectural aspects of the Caliphate. Zāhid ʿAlī also wrote a doctrinal work on the Ismāʿīlīs (of whom the Fāṭimids were the Imāms) called Hamārē Ismāʿīlī madhhab ki Haqīqat aur uskā niẓām.<sup>46</sup>

### I iii 3 Unpublished Research

Chronologically, the first thesis that needs to be noted here for its relevance to the present piece of research is Burkhard May's "Die Religionspolitik der Ägyptischen Fāṭimiden 969-1171".<sup>47</sup> As indicated in its title, the work deals with the religious policies of the Fāṭimid Caliphs in Egypt. The two main components of society that May deals with are the ahl al-dhimma and the ahl al-sunna. He also speaks about the Fāṭimid Caliphs' dealings with the Ismāʿīlī daʿwa within as well as outside their domains. When discussing specifically the religious policies of the Fāṭimid sovereign al-ʿAzīz, May's work provides a rather useful overview

on the issue.

The next piece of unpublished research to which attention is drawn is John H. Forsyth's thorough and painstakingly researched work on "The Byzantine-Arab Chronicle of Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Anṭakī (938-1034)".<sup>48</sup> The merits of al-Anṭakī's chronicle have already been highlighted. Suffice it to say, then, that Forsyth's work makes a significant contribution to the history of Egypt and Syria in the fourth/tenth-fifth/eleventh centuries. More specifically, it proved invaluable in piecing together the Fāṭimid-Byzantine scene in al-ʿAzīz's time.

Yacov Lev's thesis, "A Political Study of Egypt and Syria under the Early Fāṭimids 358/968-386/996", is another work that deserves comment.<sup>49</sup> Although since writing his thesis, Lev has published a number of articles on various aspects of the Fāṭimid era, nonetheless, the value of the thesis still remains. Particularly since the first two chapters of the thesis speak about the two regimes immediately preceding the Fāṭimids - the Ṭūlūnids and the Ikhshīdids. Lev's work therefore provides an important insight into the Fāṭimid takeover of Egypt. Lev's chapter on Fāṭimid policies in Syria under its first two sovereigns - al-Muʿizz and al-ʿAzīz - is another useful feature of the thesis. The rest of the chapters on the Fāṭimids can be classified as providing an overview of the various aspects of the new regime - giving rather useful background reading - rather than an in-depth study of it.

The chapter on Fāṭimid-Byzantine relations during al-ʿAzīz's time has also been well served by the doctorate of Wasam A. Faraj, "Byzantium and its Muslim Neighbours during the Reign of Basil II (976-1025)".<sup>50</sup> It is a coincidence of medieval history that al-ʿAzīz and Basil II, the two most powerful of the Fāṭimid and Byzantine rulers, respectively, were contemporaries. The relations between these two esteemed personalities were, to say the least, active. A study focussing on the personality and the reign of Basil II is consequently a rather useful asset in determining Fāṭimid-Byzantine relations at the time.

Paula Sanders's thesis, "The Court Ceremonial of the Fāṭimid Caliphate in Egypt",<sup>51</sup> is yet another worthwhile piece of research conducted on the Fāṭimids in the last few years. What Sanders set out to achieve and successfully manages to do, is to establish a chronological framework of the development of Fāṭimid ceremonies and to place these within the context of Fāṭimid political and religious history. Sanders's work provides, for instance, the perfect setting in which a meaningful discussion on the aspects of al-ʿAzīz's authority as an Ismāʿīlī Imām is made possible.

Chronologically, the last thesis on the Fāṭimids which has been of value is that written by Gene William Heck, entitled "Cairo or Baghdad...? A Critical Examination of the Role of Egypt in the Fāṭimid Dynasty's Imperial Designs."<sup>52</sup> In his work Heck cogently argues that once the Fāṭimids had moved from North Africa to Egypt, they did not then endeavour even once to move in a similar

way to Baghdad. What they sought to do, however, was to make Cairo their headquarters and it was from that city which they had founded themselves, that they implemented their imperialistic goals. It is difficult to pinpoint the usefulness of Heck's work to one particular chapter of this thesis, but the ideas that he advocated and proved so analytically have been utilised whenever appropriate throughout this thesis.

## II Political Overview of Al-ʿAzīz's Reign

The fifth Fāṭimid sovereign, al-ʿAzīz billāh, acceded to the Caliphate in 365/975. He was the first member of his dynasty to begin his reign in Egypt. Although the Fāṭimids had conquered Egypt in 358/969, just six years prior to al-ʿAzīz's coming to power, nonetheless, al-ʿAzīz's predecessor, al-Muʿizz lidīn Allāh (319/931-365/975) was successful in leaving as his legacy for his heir a firm Fāṭimid foothold in Egypt. As a result, al-ʿAzīz was unhampered by any political or military upheavals upon his takeover in Egypt. On the foundations laid down by his father, al-ʿAzīz subsequently built a strong and thriving Fāṭimid state in Egypt. In these effective endeavours of his the Fāṭimid sovereign was assisted by his skilful vizier, Yaʿqūb b. Killis. It is the latter who is credited with laying the cornerstone of the acclaimed Fāṭimid administrative structure in Egypt.

Syria, however, was one region where the Fāṭimid political



situation was far from stable, when al-ʿAzīz took over the reins of government. The instability of Fāṭimid rule in Syria undoubtedly posed the greatest threat to the security of the as yet nascent Fāṭimid state in Egypt. Consequently, Syria was the principal area that occupied al-ʿAzīz's attention throughout his reign.

The Fāṭimid sovereign's initial objective was to subjugate southern and central Syria. Al-ʿAzīz's determination to implement his policies concerning Syria led him to march personally against the Būyid ghulām, Alptegin, who had installed himself at Damascus, just prior to al-Muʿizz's death. The former had subsequently proclaimed the sovereignty of the ʿAbbāsids instead of that of the Fāṭimids. Al-ʿAzīz's triumphant victory over Alptegin in Muḥarram 368/August 978, did not, however, translate into direct Fāṭimid control over central and southern Syria. That took place four years later, in 372/982, when al-ʿAzīz's Turkish general Yaltakīn conclusively defeated Qassām and Mufarrij b. Daghfal - the two elements who opposed Fāṭimid authority in the area. That ambition achieved, al-ʿAzīz then diverted his attention to northern Syria.

Unlike central and southern Syria which were in political disarray at this time and were consequently up for grabs by any power that had the military muscle to do so, the northern region was much more politically stable. It was ruled by the Ḥamdānids, who although not powerful enough to ward off the major military powers of the time on their own, were nonetheless able to do so, with

material and monetary assistance from Byzantium. It was with the latter that the Ḥamdānids had signed a treaty in the 350s/960s according to which Byzantium would defend Ḥamdānid territories. The attraction of <sup>northern</sup> Syria, particularly that of its principal city Aleppo, lay in its extremely strategic location from a military as well as a commercial point of view. It is hardly surprising, then, that al-ʿAzīz coveted control of it. To that end he commissioned a number of campaigns aimed at conquering it.

Fāṭimid interest in Aleppo was also the key factor that triggered off hostilities between the Fāṭimids and Byzantium. For, the latter viewed northern Syria as being within their sphere of influence. In fact, so crucial was Byzantine hegemony in the area regarded by them, that the Byzantine Emperor Basil II personally undertook a campaign in Syria in 385/995, so as to undermine increasing Fāṭimid authority in the region. The Fāṭimid response was not long in coming. Al-ʿAzīz immediately made preparations for a massive war effort in Syria which he was to command in person. It was while he was on his way to Syria, however, that death overtook him, on 28 Ramaḍān 386/14 October 996.

Iraq's physical proximity to Syria meant that even the Būyids, as one of the emergent powers of the medieval Middle East, attempted to establish their sway over the Levant. This is particularly evident in the heyday of Būyid power, during the reign of ʿAḍud al-Dawla (338-372/949-983). Fāṭimid-Būyid relations were, consequently, coloured by ʿAḍud al-Dawla and al-ʿAzīz's policies

concerning Syria. Hence Fāṭimid involvement in Syria had implications that were more far reaching in consequence than just the politics of that country. It had major repercussions on Fāṭimid diplomatic relations with the other two regional superpowers of the time - Byzantium and the Būyids.

The Fāṭimids, as heirs to the Aghlabid possessions in North Africa had subsequently emerged as a Mediterranean power of considerable strength. Consequently, it was inevitable that there would be a conflict of interests between the Fāṭimids and the Umayyads who ruled over Andalusia, situated on the other side of the Mediterranean. The battleground of these two adversaries was the Maghrib, where the Umayyads took up the cause of the Zanāta Berbers whilst the Fāṭimids staunchly supported their Sanhāja counterparts. Hence the conflicts between the two major branches of the Berbers in the Maghrib often reflected the hostilities of the powers backing them up.

Al-ʿAzīz's policies concerning the Maghrib were not, however, just a reaction to Fāṭimid-Umayyad diplomacy. The very first ruler of the Fāṭimid dynasty, al-Mahdī billāh (297-322/909-934) had come to power in North Africa. In fact, as mentioned previously, al-ʿAzīz was the very first Fāṭimid ruler to begin his reign in Egypt, having come to that country just three years previously in 362/972. It is to be expected, then, that the fifth Fāṭimid sovereign's links with the birthplace of his empire founded by his great, great grandfather were rather deep rooted. There were,

moreover, sound economic and military reasons for al-ʿAzīz continuing to maintain regular contact with the Maghrib, despite the Fāṭimid move to Egypt.

Territorially the Fāṭimid empire in al-ʿAzīz's time was at times larger than that of his predecessor. It encompassed central and eastern Maghrib, most of the islands of the Mediterranean, including Crete and Sicily, Egypt and most of the cities of central and southern Syria. Nominal allegiance was also paid to the Fāṭimid Caliph from the pulpits of the two most prestigious cities of Islam, Mecca and Medina. In Muḥarram 382/March-April 992 the ruler at Mosul, Abū Duwād Muḥammad b. al-Musaib al-Uqailī had the Fāṭimid sovereign's name inscribed on coins and banners. In addition, the khutba (Friday sermon) was recited in al-ʿAzīz's name in Sind, Mūltān, Kirmān, Khwārazm and in the Yemen.

Al-ʿAzīz is considered by the sources to be the wisest and the best of all the Fāṭimid monarchs to rule over Egypt. This is clearly evident in the tranquillity and prosperity that Egypt enjoyed during his twenty-one year reign.



# FOOTNOTES

1. Lev, "A Political Study of Egypt and Syria under the Early Fāṭimids 358/968-386/996". Unpublished PhD thesis, Manchester University (1978). For the religious policy of the Fāṭimids cf. also Burkhard May, "Die religionspolitik der Agyptischen Fāṭimiden 969-1171", unpublished PhD thesis, University of Hamburg (1975).
2. See for instance, J. M. Bloom, "Meaning in Early Fāṭimid Architecture: Islamic Art in North Africa and Egypt in the Fourth Century AH (tenth century AD)", unpublished PhD thesis, Harvard University, (1980); P. Sanders, "The Court Ceremonial of the Fāṭimid Caliphate in Egypt", unpublished PhD thesis, Princeton University (1984). Caroline Williams, "The Fāṭimī Mausolea of Cairo", unpublished MA thesis, American University in Cairo, (1970); also see a number of good articles on the subject under discussion in the various issues of Muqarnas.
3. Lev, op. cit., 2-18.
4. W. Ivanow, "Ismailis and Qarmatians", JBBRAS, vol. 16 (1940), 46.
5. The Sīra was edited by M. K. Ḥusain and M. A. Shaḥīra (Cairo, 1954). The work was also translated into French by M. Canard, Vie de l'Ustadh Jawdhar (Algiers, 1958).
6. Not much information is available on the scribe, except that at the death of Ustādh Jawdhar, he was promoted to his master's rank. Because of the scribe's close affiliation with the Fāṭimid Caliph al-ʿAzīz, he is known as al-ʿAzīzī. According to al-Maqrīzī this scribe rose to a prominent rank in al-Ḥākim's time. See I. K. Poonawala, Biobibliography of Ismāʿīlī Literature (California, 1977), 90.
7. Dīwān Tamīm b. al-Muʿizz, ed. M. K. Ḥusain (Cairo, 1957). The work was re-edited by A. Tāmīr (Beirut, 1982). The editor of the latter work does not, however, contribute any significant information on Tamīm or his poetry. In fact, in his introduction to the Dīwān he takes complete sentences from the previous editor's work without acknowledging their source.
8. Tamīm was born in 337/948-9 at al-Mahdīya and died in Cairo in 375/985. He was a poet of repute in his time. Al-Thaʿālibī quotes some of his verses in his literary work Yatimat al-Dahr fī Shuʿarā' ahl al-ʿAṣr (Damascus, n.d.), 2 vols.
9. Manuscripts of the work are to be found in Tübingen. Cf. Poonawala, op. cit., 81. The treatise has been summarised by

W. Ivanow, "Tenth Century Ismā'īlī Dā'ī in Persia" in Early Persian Ismā'īlism (Bombay, 1955), 123-40. For references on the dā'ī himself see Poonawala, op. cit., 80.

10. References to the manuscripts of the work are listed in Poonawala, op. cit., 92. The treatise also forms the basis of W. Ivanow's study on "The Organization of the Fāṭimid Propaganda", JBBRAS, 15 (1939), 1-35. On al-Nīsābūrī and his other works see Poonawala, op. cit., 91-2.
11. On these and other writers of al-ʿAzīz's time see Poonawala, op. cit., 70-92.
12. The volume which covers the reign of al-ʿAzīz is the sixth. It has been edited by Mustafā Ghālib (Beirut, 1984). Al-ʿAzīz's period is dealt with from pp. 202-248.
13. For the author and his voluminous other works see Poonawala, op. cit., xiii and 169-75.
14. The biography of al-ʿAzīz is covered in de Sacy's translation of the Wafayāt (Beirut, 1970), III, 525-30.
15. Ed. C. J. Tornberg (Leiden, 1864). Al-ʿAzīz's reign is reported in volumes VIII and IX.
16. On the Qādī see Poonawala, op. cit.
17. Pp. 51-68.
18. The full title of this work is Kītab al-majālis wa'l musayarāt wa'l-mawāqif wa'l-tauqiʿāt ʿan al-Imām al-Muʿizz li dīn Allāh wa ʿ abā'ihī. Ed. al-Ḥabīb al-Faqī et. al., (Tunis, 1978).
19. "Heterodox Ismā'īlism at the time of al-Muʿizz", BSOAS, vol., 17 (1955), 13.
20. Op. cit., 8.
21. On Ibn Hānī<sup>2</sup> see Poonawala, op. cit., 47. See also Dachraoui, E.1<sup>2</sup>, III, 785-6. The Dīwān was edited by Ṣāhid ʿAlī (Cairo, 1352 AH).
22. (California, 1977).
23. (London, 1984), 2 vols.
24. On al-Anṭakī see Canard, E.1<sup>2</sup>, I, 516. See also the extremely well researched work of John Harper Forsyth, "The Byzantine-Arab Chronicle of Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Anṭakī," unpublished PhD thesis, University of Michigan (1977), 2 vols.

25. Forsyth, op. cit., 1.
  26. On Ibn Miskawaih and his work see The Index to E.1<sup>2</sup>, vols I-III (Leiden, 1979) where twenty-eight references on him and his work are mentioned. See also the brief write-up on him in E.1<sup>1</sup>, II, 404. Also, Miskawaih, The Concluding Portion of the Experience of the Nations, English translation D. S. Margoliouth, (Oxford, 1921) 2 vols.
  27. On al-Tha<sup>c</sup>ālibī see Wafayāt, II, 129-30.
  28. Ed. G. S. Colin and E. Lévi-Provençal (Leiden, 1948-51), 2 vols. On Ibn <sup>c</sup>Idhārī see I. Bosch-Vilá, E.1<sup>2</sup>, III, 805-6.
  29. (Bulaq, 1824). On Ibn Khaldūn see the detailed article by M. Talbī, E.1<sup>2</sup>, III, 825-31.
  30. Ed. W. Popper (Berkeley, 1909-29), II, pt. 2. On Abu'l-Maḥāsin see W. Popper, E.1<sup>2</sup>, I, 138.
  31. Ed. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl (Cairo, 1967).
  32. In addition to Madelung's articles related to the Fāṭimids in the E.1<sup>2</sup> (such as "Ismā<sup>c</sup>īliyya", III, 198-206 (etc.) and in his Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam. Variorum Reprints (London, 1987), see also his "Fāṭimiden und Bahrain Qarmaten", Der Islam XXXIV (1959), 34-88 and "Das Imamāt in der frühen Ismailitischen Lehre" Der Islam, XXXVI (1961), 43-135.
- Abbas
33. Some of the works of Hamdani on the Fāṭimids are as follows: The Fāṭimids (Karachi, 1962); The Beginnings of the Ismā<sup>c</sup>īlī Da<sup>c</sup>wa in Northern India (Cairo, 1965); "Fāṭimid-<sup>c</sup>Abbāsīd Conflict in India", IC, XLI, no. 3 (1967), 185-91; "Some Considerations on the Fāṭimid Caliphate as a Mediterranean Power". Atti del III Congresso di Studi Arabi e Islamici (Naples, 1967), 385-96; "Some Aspects of the History of Libya during the Fāṭimid Period", Libya in History, ed. Gaddala and Printer (Beirut, 1970), 321-48; "A Possible Fāṭimid Background to the Battle of Manzikert", Tarih Arastirmalari Dergisi (Ankara, 1972), 1-40; "Byzantine-Fāṭimid Relations before the Battle of Manzikert", BS, I, pt 2, (1974), 169-79; "Evolution of the Organizational Structure of the Fāṭimid da<sup>c</sup>wah: The Yemeni and Persian Contribution", AS, III (1976), 85-114; "An Early Fāṭimid Source for the Authorship of the Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā", Arabica, XXXVI (1979), 62-75; "A Re-examination of al-Mahdī's Letter to the Yemenites on the Genealogy of the Fāṭimid Caliphs", JRAS, (1983), 173-207.
  34. See, for instance, his "Die Sīrat Ibn Ḥauṣab: Die ismailitische Da<sup>c</sup>wa in Jemen und die Fatimiden", Welt des Orients XII (1981), "Salamiya: Home of the Fāṭimids",



Typescript, courtesy of the author of a lecture delivered at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London (3 November 1983).

35. Y. Lev, "The Fāṭimid Vizier Yaʿqūb b. Killis", Der Islam, 58 (1981), 237-49; "The Fāṭimids and the ahdāth of Damascus, 386/996-441/1021", WO, 13 (1982), 97-106; "The Fāṭimid Navy: Byzantium and the Mediterranean Sea", Byzantion, LIV (1984), 220-52.
36. J. Bloom, "The Mosque of al-Ḥākim in Cairo", Muqarnas, I, (1982); "The Origins of Fāṭimid Art", Muqarnas III (1985). See also his "Meaning of Early Fāṭimid Architecture".
37. See, for example, her "Cult of ʿAlīd Saints in the Fāṭimid Monuments of Cairo", Muqarnas, III (1985), 39-60. See also "The Fāṭimid Mausolea of Cairo".
38. "Lumières nouvelles sur quelques sources de l'histoire fāṭimide en Égypte", AI, XIII (1977).
39. Called Akhbār Miṣr, ed. A. F. Sayyid and T. Bianquis (Cairo, 1978).
40. Called Kitāb al-Baizara, French translation by F. Viré (Leiden, 1967).
41. "Une description fantastique des fonds de la bibliothèque royale ḥizānat al-kutub au Caire sous le règne du Calife fāṭimide al-ʿAzīz bi-llāh", 123-40, in the Proceedings of the Ninth Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants, ed. R. Peters (Leiden, 1981). Khoury has based his article on a lengthy report by al-Maqrīzī (Khitāt, I, 408-9). He translates this report and comments upon it in his article.
42. See, for example, his Aʿlām al-Ismāʿīliya (Beirut, 1964); Taʾrīkh al-Daʿwa al-Ismāʿīliya. Third edition (Beirut, 1979). Ḥusain was also the principal editor of the Dīwān of Tamīm b. al-Muʿizz (Cairo, 1957).
43. Al-ʿAzīz billāh al-Fāṭimī (Cairo, 1968). This work was published by the Ministry of Culture of Egypt.
44. Al-Khalīfah al-Fāṭimī al-Khāmis al-ʿAzīz billāh (Beirut, 1982).
45. The work is in two volumes (Hyderabad, 1948).
46. (Hyderabad, 1954). Zāhid ʿAlī also edited and commented on the Dīwān of Ibn Hānī al-Andalusī, Tabyīn al-Maʿānī fī sharḥ Dīwān Ibn Hānī (Cairo, 1352 AH).
47. (Hamburg, 1975).

48. (Michigan, 1977).
49. (Manchester, 1978).
50. (Birmingham 1979).
51. (Princeton, 1984).
52. (Michigan, 1986).



## CHAPTER 2

### THE LIFE OF AL-ʿAZĪZ BILLĀH

Al-ʿAzīz billāh, the fifth Fāṭimid Imām/Caliph, was the first ruler of the dynasty to begin his reign in Egypt. In order to comprehend al-ʿAzīz's activities as the suzerain of his empire, it is interesting to gain an insight into al-ʿAzīz as a person. It is also rather useful to establish a chronological framework of the major events in the personal life of a monarch like al-ʿAzīz, for they have a bearing on other aspects of his reign. In addition, a biographical account such as the one undertaken in the following pages provides as complete a picture of al-ʿAzīz, as the sources permit. He emerges, as a result, not just as a sovereign who ruled his empire wisely but also as a humane and cultured individual.

#### I Birth and Formative Years:

Born at al-Mahdīya on Thursday, 14 Muḥarram 344/11 May 955, Nizār - as al-ʿAzīz was named - was the third of the four sons of al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh (319/931- 365/975)).<sup>1</sup> His mother was an Arab, an umm walad called Durzān.<sup>2</sup> The reticence of the sources on the Maghribī phase of his life indicates that Nizār was perhaps little involved in state matters at the time. Two factors may account for this; his youth and the fact that whilst still in the

Maghrib, his elder brother ʿAbd Allāh had been appointed walī ʿahd. Consequently, the latter was probably being groomed for leadership, to the exclusion of all others. What is certain, however, is that Nizār was in the retinue of al-Muʿizz during the latter's journey from the Maghrib to Egypt. Along with the rest of his family, Nizār then took up residence at the Caliphal palace in Cairo on 7 Ramaḍān 362/11 June 973.<sup>3</sup> The sources continue to maintain their silence concerning Nizār for the first couple of years after his arrival in Egypt.

On 23 Jumādā I 364/8 February 975 Amīr ʿAbd Allāh - the successor designate of al-Muʿizz - died after a brief period of illness.<sup>4</sup> Amīr ʿAbd Allāh's death had major repercussions on Nizār's hitherto rather unassuming life. It brought Nizār into the limelight of history - both of his own dynasty and of the medieval world at large. For, following ʿAbd Allāh's death, it was upon Nizār that al-Muʿizz's choice fell as his next walī ʿahd. That despite the fact that the eldest son of al-Muʿizz, Tamīm,<sup>5</sup> (born 337/948-9) was still alive.

## II The Issue of Succession: Tamīm, ʿAbd Allāh or Nizār

Al-Muʿizz's appointment of his son Nizār as his successor meant that his first-born, Tamīm, was excluded from leadership for the second time. Though not unknown, it was rather unusual for a ruler to bypass his eldest son in favour of the next one, when the

eldest was perfectly capable, physically and mentally, of ruling. For al-Mu<sup>c</sup>izz to circumvent Tamīm twice, however, clearly reveals that the Fāṭimid sovereign must have had some grave reasons for doing so. Unfortunately, the sources pass over the matter without any comment. Ibn Khallikān is typical in this respect. He says that:

Tamīm was a man of superior talent and a poet, gifted with a subtle wit and a refined taste; he did not, however, obtain the supreme authority, as the throne devolved to his brother al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz in virtue of the solemn covenant by which this prince had been recognised, during his father's lifetime, as the legitimate successor to the empire.<sup>6</sup>

One of the more usual reasons cited for a monarch favouring some sons of his as opposed to others is due to harīm intrigue. Often an influential wife or a favourite concubine managed to secure the succession of her own male offspring to the throne. No evidence can be found, however, to support this contention, in any of the pro- or anti-Fāṭimid sources.

The one argument offered by Ibn al-<sup>c</sup>Abbār for al-Mu<sup>c</sup>izz's exclusion of Tamīm from Caliphal authority is that the latter had no sons.<sup>7</sup> This hypothesis has correctly been rejected by the principal editor of the Dīwān of Tamīm b. Mu<sup>c</sup>izz, Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusain. As pointed out by him, Tamīm had a son called <sup>c</sup>Alī and in fact, it was because of this son of his that Tamīm's kunya was Abū <sup>c</sup>Alī.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the premise that the walī <sup>c</sup>ahd had to have a male offspring prior to his being nominated for succession is groundless. Al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz's own appointment is a case in point. He did not father a son until ten years after he had been chosen as

the heir apparent by al-Mu<sup>c</sup>izz.<sup>9</sup>

The most plausible explanation for al-Mu<sup>c</sup>izz's aversion to Tamīm's involvement in public life is to be found in the latter's own dīwān. His poems unveil the fact that there was dissension among the families of the first, second and third Fāṭimid Caliphs, al-Mahdī, al-Qā'im and al-Manṣūr respectively. Some members of these families also had their own axes to grind against the Fāṭimid authorities.<sup>10</sup> Tamīm's poetry clearly reflects the adverse effects that disharmony within the Fāṭimid clan had on him. It also highlights where Tamīm's sympathies lay. As with any other dynasties, so too, the Fāṭimids had their own set of problems.

The major cause of discord between the ruling house and the rest of the Fāṭimids was, as can be expected, the ever present threat of contenders to al-Mu<sup>c</sup>izz's authority by the latter's princes. Royal aspirants to the throne can, after all, pose the most menacing challenge to the dynastic ruler. Revolts led by relatives of the Fāṭimid Caliphs were not unknown. Ibn al-Athīr, in fact, reports that soon after the death of the first Fāṭimid Caliph, al-Mahdī, a certain Ibn Tālūt al-Qarshī, revolted in the region of Tripoli (of the Maghrib).<sup>11</sup> The basis of his claim was that he was a son of al-Mahdī. To keep an eye on the activities of the various sections of the royal family, al-Mu<sup>c</sup>izz restricted their movements in various ways. They were, for instance, not permitted to mingle freely with the local people. They could not,



for example, go to local markets. These impositions provoked bitter complaints from the royal family and further embittered its members.<sup>12</sup>

That there were close links between Tamīm and his agitated and "rebellious" clansmen was a matter beyond doubt. Nor was it a closely safeguarded secret. Indeed, even al-Mu<sup>c</sup>izz and his chief minister, Jawdhar<sup>13</sup>, were well aware of Tamīm's relations with these princes. It is extremely likely that the latter were planning some sort of an operation against the government, for Jawdhar requested al-Mu<sup>c</sup>izz to sanction the arrest of these princes. Al-Mu<sup>c</sup>izz restrained his minister by asking how could he deal so severely with his own relatives and that further investigation into their case was necessary before any firm action could be taken.<sup>14</sup> Matters did not, of course, end here. In fact they took a turn for the worse when the Fāṭimid governor of Sicily, Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan al-Kalbī, sought the Fāṭimid Caliph's permission to have his own son Ṭāhir executed for the latter's association with Tamīm.<sup>15</sup>

Ḥusain has suggested that perhaps it was the discontented relatives of Tamīm who encouraged him to revolt against his father and who offered him their assistance to help him come to power. The question arises, however, as to why Tamīm felt the need to seize power in the first place. He was, after all, the first-born and had he chosen to follow his father's policies, he would, in all likelihood, have succeeded him to office. It may well be that



Tamīm's involvement with his "rebellious" relatives was too binding for him to retract when matters went too far. Unfortunately, the paucity of information on the issue does not permit any conclusive remarks on Tamīm's motives. What is certain, though, is that Tamīm's connections with the "malefactors" cost him the Caliphate.

In 359/969-70 al-Mu<sup>ḥ</sup>izz confided to Jawdhar alone that his second son, <sup>ḥ</sup>Abd Allāh, was to be the walī <sup>ḥ</sup>ahd. Seven months later other eminent state officials such as al-Ḥasan b. <sup>ḥ</sup>Uslūj were also taken into his confidence and informed of al-Mu<sup>ḥ</sup>izz's decision.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the debarring of Tamīm from public office, at a personal level relations between father and son seem to have been cordial enough for the latter to accompany al-Mu<sup>ḥ</sup>izz to Egypt.<sup>17</sup> Once in Cairo, Tamīm lived for some time at the royal palace with the rest of his family members. Even in Egypt, however, al-Mu<sup>ḥ</sup>izz remained adamant on excluding Tamīm from state affairs. When, for instance, in 363/973 the Qarāmita threatened the Fāṭimids on their very doorstep, it was <sup>ḥ</sup>Abd Allāh, not Tamīm, who was appointed to the crucial post of commander-in-chief by al-Mu<sup>ḥ</sup>izz, in order to repulse the enemy.<sup>18</sup>

Tamīm's exclusion from leadership left him time enough to develop his considerable literary potential. He was an accomplished poet.<sup>19</sup> After his arrival in Egypt Tamīm seems to have occupied himself with the leisurely pastimes of his day. So much so that

when Amīr ʿAbd Allāh died and Tamīm was passed over the second time, in favour of his younger brother, he offered no resistance at all, and until his death in Dhu'l-Qa'da 374/April 985, Tamīm composed eulogies on his younger brother whenever suitable opportunities arose. In fact, he took the bayʿa (oath of allegiance) for Nizār straight away.

Canard finds it rather surprising that al-Muʿizz's nomination of Nizār as his walī ʿahd did not seem to have caused even a ripple in Ismāʿīlī circles.<sup>21</sup> According to Canard, the death of Amīr ʿAbd Allāh in his father's lifetime is rather reminiscent of the death of the heir apparent, Ismāʿīl in 145/761-2 while his father, Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq was still alive. At that time the issue of succession had caused a major split in the community. The Ismāʿīlī stance then had been that once the imāma had been conferred on Ismāʿīl, it could not then be transferred to anyone else except someone from his own progeny, that is, his own son. Consequently, according to the Ismāʿīlīs, the Imām after Ismāʿīl was his son Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl.<sup>22</sup> In fact, it was because of their adherence to Ismāʿīl and his progeny that the Ismāʿīlīs came to be called by that appellation.

Two possible explanations can be put forward for the lack of controversy concerning Nizār's accession. One of the paramount precepts of Ismāʿīlism to this day is that the Imām invokes total obedience of the believers. Hence, if the Imām had decided at the death of his second son ʿAbd Allāh that it was his third son Nizār

who was to succeed him, then that was his decision and it had to be implicitly accepted by all the Ismāʿīlīs. Secondly, what had happened in the case of Ismāʿīl, according to the Ismāʿīlī viewpoint, was that Jaʿfar al-Šādiq had made the nass (designation) in favour of his son Ismāʿīl who in turn had appointed his son Muḥammad as his successor. The circumstances in ʿAbd Allāh's case were somewhat different. The sources do not mention whether ʿAbd Allāh had any sons. There is no evidence, moreover, of his having appointed someone to succeed him. The issue of the imāma continuing in ʿAbd Allāh's progeny does not, therefore, arise.

### III Nizār - the Next Fāṭimid Sovereign

Meanwhile, sometime in Rabīʿ II 365/December 975, Nizār was nominated by al-Muʿizz as the heir to the imāma. Subsequent to the proclamation of Nizār as the walī ʿahd, members of the royal family as well as civil and military dignitaries of the State were invited by the Caliph to take the bayʿa to Nizār. Soon after the bayʿat al-khāṣṣa had been undertaken, al-Muʿizz died. The walī ʿahd, who was then twenty-two years old, recited the funeral prayer over his father and then laid him to rest. Al-Muʿizz's demise was kept a secret until ʿĪd al-Nahr of the following year. On that day, 10 Dhu'l-Ḥijja 365/9 August 976, al-Muʿizz's death and Nizār's succession were officially proclaimed.<sup>23</sup>

On that occasion Nizār adopted the title al-ʿAzīz billāh<sup>24</sup> by which he is subsequently referred to in the sources. In describing the events of the day of accession, al-Maqrīzī and ʿImād al-Dīn ʿIdrīs mention that once al-ʿAzīz's khilāfa had been publicly pronounced, he rode under a mizalla<sup>25</sup> (parasol) to the muṣallā (place of prayer). There he ascended the pulpit, personally led the Muslims in prayer and delivered the khutba. He then consoled himself on his father's death. This was followed by the people greeting al-ʿAzīz as the new khalīfa, the Amīr al-Muʿminīn. The ceremonies ended by the ʿāmma (the common people) taking the bayʿa in al-ʿAzīz's name.<sup>26</sup> The occasion was also commemorated in verse by Amīr Tamīm. The royal poet composed some verses extempore, a sampling of which is as follows:

1. We, on this occasion of ʿĪd are celebrating two ʿĪds,<sup>27</sup>  
because of you.
2. You appear like the sun on its most fortunate day,  
In fact your light is more radiant than the two [the sun  
and the moon].<sup>28</sup>
3. Dignity mounted on the saddle,  
you look like the <sup>full</sup>moon in the sky and like the lion with  
the two cubs.<sup>29</sup>
6. They [the people] see the moral qualities and physical  
features of their Prophet  
In you, the attributes of two Muḥammads.<sup>30</sup>
8. You evoke fully both the fear of God and the expectation  
of good tidings in those who were in your presence.
9. To them you combine both praise and admonition,  
as well as promises and threats.
10. You are the manifest Imām and its [imāma's] wisdom  
and the one who has mastered the two languages.<sup>31</sup>
11. May God bless you, as you are the king  
whose hands generosity regards as two right hands.<sup>32</sup>



Amīr Tamīm also composed another poem for that auspicious day, lauding the imāma of his brother. Some of the verses from this poem<sup>33</sup> are cited below:

26. Let the imāma be delighted by what you have achieved,  
for God has fulfilled its hopes.
27. It [the imāma] has certainly been in communication with him  
before, so that he may bear its burden.
28. It revealed to him the command of God  
and he accepted it before he was weaned.
29. It was married to him by the command of God,  
so God dressed him in its cloak.
34. If anyone other than he administered it  
the earth would throw up its burden.<sup>34</sup>
35. Long live al-ʿAzīz, safely for the imāma  
holding firmly its nooses and bolt.
36. Honouring its supporters all the time  
and striking by the sword its deserters.
42. Through him God accepts the obligation to fast,  
the duty of the pilgrimage and the prayers of the  
pilgrims.

Anecdotes concerning al-ʿAzīz's accession appear to have come into circulation at this time. The most well-known of these is attributed to al-ʿAzīz himself and was first reported by al-Muṣabbiḥī and al-Maqrīzī in their works. It runs in dialogue form thus:

I heard Mawlānā al-ʿAzīz say: "One day Mawlāna al-Muʿizz was walking in his palace. My brothers, Tamīm, ʿAbd Allāh, Uqail and I were walking behind him. It occurred to me then, I wonder if this matter [i.e. the Caliphate] will come to my brother ʿAbd Allāh or my brother Tamīm or to me? If it comes to me, I will be walking like this and they will be around me."

Al-Muʿizz reached his destination. We stood in front of him. The group dispersed. I, too, was about to depart when he



[i.e. al-Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>izz] said: "O Nizār, don't leave." So I stood there until no one remained in front of him except me. He brought me close and said, "Upon my life, O Nizār, if I ask you about something, will you tell the truth?" I replied: "Yes, Mawlānā." He said: "I turned towards you and saw that you were filled with pride. You were looking at me, then at yourself and your brothers. I stole a glance at you while you were unaware - and you were saying to yourself, 'If this matter comes to me, my brothers will be around me' ".

Al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz said, "I blushed, came near him and kissed his hands. I then said, 'May Allāh make us all a sacrifice for you.' He [al-Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>izz] said, 'Stop all that. Was not that so?' I replied, 'Yes, Mawlānā, how did you know?' He [al-Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>izz] continued: 'I guessed so. Moreover, I could not allow myself to see you filled with pride for something other than this. It [the command] is going to come to you. Be good to your brothers and your family. May God help you. "<sup>35</sup>

It is perhaps anecdotes like these that led historians such as al-Anṭakī, Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn Khallikān, Ibn <sup>ʿ</sup>Idhārī, Ibn Taghrī Birdī and others to believe that Nizār was the first and only walī ʿahd appointed by al-Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>izz. For none of these writers mention, even in passing, <sup>ʿ</sup>Abd Allāh's appointment as heir apparent. Yet each of these chroniclers deals with al-Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>izz and al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz's reigns quite extensively.<sup>36</sup>

#### IV Marriage and Offspring

In 369/979, five years after his accession to the Caliphate, al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz got married. The wedding seems to have been celebrated lavishly. According to al-Maqrīzī's account (and his is the only account of the wedding), al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz fixed the dowry on the bride at two hundred thousand dinars. He also bestowed a thousand dinars

on the person who drew up the marriage contract. The qādī and the witnesses were each presented with a robe of honour and were mounted on mules. After the wedding, the bride and groom toured the town, accompanied by the beat of the drums and trumpets.<sup>37</sup> Although al-Maqrīzī does not mention either the name or the origins of al-ʿAzīz's bride, it is perhaps not too presumptuous to infer that she was originally a Byzantine Christian slave of the Melkite persuasion. That is how other historians describe al-ʿAzīz's wife. Moreover, as he is not known to have taken more than one wife, the case for this lady being the same as the bride referred to by al-Maqrīzī is further strengthened.<sup>38</sup>

On Thursday, 23 Rabiʿ I 375/13 August 985, al-ʿAzīz's wife bore him his heir. He was named Abū ʿAlī Maṣṣūr and subsequently given the title al-Ḥākim b. Amrillāh.<sup>39</sup> Hitherto, al-ʿAzīz only had one daughter, known as Saʿīdat al-Mulk. She was born in Dhu'l-Qaʿda 359/August 970, while al-ʿAzīz was still in the Maghrib.<sup>40</sup> She was a great favourite of her father. It was at her intercession, for instance, that the Christian vizier ʿĪsā b. Nestorius, who had fallen from royal grace, was restored to his former post.<sup>41</sup>

Although no specific information is available on Saʿīdat al-Mulk's mother, a couple of remarks in al-Maqrīzī's Ittiʿāz and al-Anṭakī's Ta'rīkh seem to suggest that her mother was the same woman who gave birth to al-Ḥākim. In reporting the death of al-Ḥākim's mother/ in Shaʿbān 385/October 995, for example, al-Maqrīzī states that after al-ʿAzīz had performed the funeral

rites over his wife, he returned to his tent at Munā Ja<sup>c</sup>far. His daughter, on the other hand, stayed by the coffin for a month, performing the ceremony of mourning.<sup>42</sup> The argument could be put forward that as a senior lady of the royal household, it was perhaps Sa<sup>c</sup>īdat al-Mulk's duty to perform the ceremony of mourning for a month. Yet, a mere three months later when al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz's own mother died, there is no mention of Sa<sup>c</sup>īdat al-Mulk conducting the funeral ceremonies for her.<sup>43</sup> It can be inferred, then, that the mourning ceremonies which Sa<sup>c</sup>īdat al-Mulk observed for al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz's wife were not an integral part of the royal ceremonies of the time. She performed those ceremonies for al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz's wife, not as the main lady of the royal household but rather as a daughter mourning her mother, for al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz's wife was, in all probability, her own mother.

A statement made by a well-informed, contemporary historian, al-Anṭakī, lends further support to the hypothesis that al-Ḥākim and Sa<sup>c</sup>īdat al-Mulk had the same mother. He writes that,

In Ramaḍān 375 [January-February 986] Aristos, the maternal uncle of al-Sa<sup>c</sup>īda, the daughter of al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz, was made the Patriarch of Bait al-Muqaddas.<sup>44</sup>

Well-known is the fact that Aristos was the brother of al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz's wife and an uncle of al-Ḥākim. Further evidence in support of this argument can be found in the work of Ibn Muyassar. When reporting the death of al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz's wife, he states that " her daughter"<sup>45</sup>, that is, Sa<sup>c</sup>īdat al-Mulk, performed the religious

ceremonies for a month. Had Saʿīdat al-Mulk been the daughter of al-ʿAzīz by another woman, Ibn Muyassar would not have used the suffix "hā", meaning she was "her" daughter. In the light of the discussion above, it is possible to conclude that Saʿīdat al-Mulk was born to her mother while the latter was still a slave in the Maghrib. After his accession al-ʿAzīz may well have married her some time after which she gave birth to al-Ḥākim.

It must be noted that notwithstanding the fact that <sup>prospective</sup> his bride may have been a very influential person in al-ʿAzīz's ḥarīm, it is most unusual for a medieval monarch to take one of his own concubines in marriage, ten years after she had borne him a child. Yet, it is not impossible that he did so and the weight of evidence in al-ʿAzīz's case certainly seems to point in that direction.

#### V Al-Ḥākim's Appointment as Walī ʿAhd

Soon after al-Ḥākim had turned eight, he was officially proclaimed by al-ʿAzīz as his successor in Shaʿbān 383/September-October 993. It was on that occasion that he was given the title al-Ḥākim bi amrillāh. The news of his nomination was relayed throughout the empire. It was even communicated to the dāʿīs who operated outside the Fāṭimid territories.<sup>46</sup>

Unlike his father, who remained detached from state matters in the



formative years of his life, al-Ḥākim seems to have been groomed for leadership from a young age. Once he had been appointed walī Ṣahd, he began initially to participate in and later to perform some of the public duties required of a sovereign. Al-Maqrīzī records a number of instances which confirm this. A month after his official designation, that is in Ramaḍān 383/October-November 993, al-Ḥākim accompanied his father to the Fāṭimid mosque, which subsequently came to be called al-Anwār. As this was the very first official engagement in which al-Ḥākim had participated after his appointment, the mizalla (parasol) - one of the insignia of kingship - was placed over his head, while al-ʿAzīz went without one. Al-Ḥākim also accompanied his father to the mosque on ʿĪd al-Fitr.

The following year, that is, 384/994-5, al-Ḥākim is known to have attended four public engagements. In Rabīʿ I/May he sat in on a council meeting. A few months later he accompanied his father to perform the official opening of the khalīj (canal). On each of the Fridays of Ramaḍān of that year, al-Ḥākim went with his father to the Fāṭimid mosques of al-Azhar and al-Anwār. Finally, in Dhu'l-Qaʿda/January 995 al-Ḥākim joined his father on an inspection of the armed forces held on the outskirts of Cairo. Probably, as a mark of al-Ḥākim's special position as walī Ṣahd, a separate marquee was erected for him at that event.<sup>48</sup>

By 385/995, al-Ḥākim had advanced a step further. Rather than



being merely present on public occasions, he actually undertook his father's role of leading the ceremonies. Accordingly, at the Ġīd al-Fitr of that year, it was al-Ḥākim, instead of al-ʿAzīz, who led the prayer. He also pronounced the khutba. Al-Ḥākim is described as having worn special clothes on that day with a jewelled mizalla over him.<sup>49</sup>

## VI Illness and Death

Al-Ḥākim's practice of performing the various public engagements expected of a Muslim sovereign stood him in good stead. He soon had to draw on this experience as a Caliph in his own right for al-ʿAzīz did not live to celebrate the Ġīd al-Fitr of 386/996.

While at Bilbais, located on the outskirts of Cairo, al-ʿAzīz fell ill on 25 Rajab 386/14 August 996. He suffered from colic and gall stones. For the next couple of months al-ʿAzīz's health fluctuated, sometimes he became extremely indisposed, while at other times he seemed to recover. Eventually, on Sunday 25 Ramaḍān/11 October, the Fāṭimid sovereign entered a bath, which seems to have been set up for him at the lodgings of his treasurer, Abu'l-Futūḥ Barjawān, for it is there that the sources say he took his last breath.<sup>50</sup>

Before his death, however, al-ʿAzīz made final arrangements for

the care and the succession of his son al-Ḥākim. In this connection, he held meetings with his chief qādī Muḥammad b. al-Nuḥmān as well as with the influential Kutāmī Shaikh, the commander of the Maghribī troops, Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan Ibn ‘Ammār, who had the title Amīn al-Dawla.<sup>51</sup> The Caliph then sent for his heir and conversed with him on various matters. Al-Muṣabbiḥī quotes a part of the conversation between father and son as personally related by the latter to him. He says:

O Mukhtār! My father sent for me before he breathed his last, and I found him with nothing on his body but rags and bandages. I kissed him, and he pressed me to his bosom, exclaiming: "How I grieve for thee, beloved of my heart!" and tears flowed from his eyes. He then said, "Go, my master, and play, for I am very well."<sup>52</sup>

Well he certainly was not, for al-‘Azīz’s illness continued to worsen. As soon as the Caliph quit the bath, between the zuhr and the ‘asr prayers on Tuesday 28 Ramaḍān 386/14 October 996, he passed away.<sup>53</sup>

Al-‘Azīz’s demise, unlike that of his father al-Mu‘izz, was not kept a secret even for a short period of time. His son, al-Ḥākim, was immediately heralded as the next Fāṭimid sovereign. Al-Ḥākim describes in his own words, as narrated by al-Muṣabbiḥī, the events immediately following the death of al-‘Azīz.

I obeyed [my father’s command to go and play] and began to amuse myself with such sports as are usual with boys, and soon afterwards, God took him to Himself. Barjawān then hastened to me and, seeing me on the top of a sycamore tree,

he exclaimed, "Come down, my boy! May God protect you and us all." When I descended, he placed on my head the turban adorned with jewels, kissed the ground before me and said: "Hail to the Commander of the Faithful, with the mercy of God and His blessings." He then led me out in that attire and showed me to the people, who all kissed the ground before me and saluted me with the title of Caliph.<sup>54</sup>

The day after al-ʿAzīz's death, the new Caliph, al-Ḥākim, made a grand entrance into the royal palace at Cairo preceded by a litter bearing his father's corpse. On that same day, al-ʿAzīz's body was laid to rest, next to that of his father, al-Muʿizz, in the burial chamber of the royal palace. The body had been washed and prepared for funeral by Qāḍī Muḥammād b. al-Nuʿmān.

Historians vary in their opinion on how old al-ʿAzīz was when he passed away. Ibn Muyassar, however, gives the most accurate dates. He states that al-ʿAzīz was forty-two years, eight months and fourteen days old when he died. He also provides the nearest figure to the length of time al-ʿAzīz reigned over Egypt, which was twenty-one years, eight months and eighteen days.<sup>55</sup>

## VII Personality

The vivid description of the physical features of the fifth Fāṭimid Caliph, al-ʿAzīz, given in the sources, portrays him as a rather attractive-looking person. He is said to have been a tall, broad-shouldered man, with reddish hair, dark blue eyes and a tawny complexion.<sup>56</sup>

His personality, as recounted by all historians, was, however,

even more appealing. Ibn Taghrī Birdī, for instance, remarks that al-ʿAzīz had excellent qualities. In his opinion the Fāṭimid sovereign was a brave, enterprising, patient and good-natured individual who was apt to forgive and who hated shedding blood. He was also just and kind to his subjects.<sup>57</sup> Ibn Taghrī Birdī's assessment of al-ʿAzīz's character is in total agreement with other historians who discussed his character.<sup>58</sup>

#### VII i Forgiving Nature

The one quality of al-ʿAzīz extolled by all the writers is his inclination to forgiveness even when he had the authority to punish. The example most often cited in this connection is al-ʿAzīz's exemplary behaviour towards a Būyid ghulām Alptegin, who challenged Fāṭimid rule in Syria. He posed such a serious threat that al-ʿAzīz had to march against him in person. Although the Fāṭimid ruler defeated Alptegin, he managed to do so at a tremendous cost to his treasury, estimated by al-Maqrīzī at one hundred thousand dinars.<sup>59</sup> After the battle Alptegin attempted to escape. Ibn al-Athīr describes the scene when Alptegin was caught escaping from the battlefield:

When Alptegin (Arabic: Aftakīn) arrived at al-ʿAzīz['s tent] he had no doubt that al-ʿAzīz would have him killed immediately. [Instead], al-ʿAzīz honoured him and was beneficent to him beyond his comprehension. Al-ʿAzīz ordered a tent to be pitched for him and returned to him all those people who had served him so Alptegin did not lose any of his former status. He sent him gifts and money, the like of which he had not seen, he took him with him to Egypt and made him among his special attendants and hājibs.<sup>60</sup>

Al-Maqrīzī continues the narrative on Alptegin. After his arrival



in Egypt,

Alptegin was made known in the best possible manner. When he returned from his tour [of Cairo] he [al-ʿAzīz] granted him a great deal of wealth and presented him a robe of honour. He [al-ʿAzīz] also asked the nobles to invite him to their houses. There was not a single one among them who did not play host to him, give him gifts and riding beasts.<sup>61</sup>

So overwhelmed was Alptegin himself by the munificence of al-ʿAzīz that he is reported to have said:

I am ashamed to ride with Mawlānā al-ʿAzīz billāh or to look at him for he has showered me with [such] honour and favours.<sup>62</sup>

Undoubtedly, al-ʿAzīz had political motives concerning the Turkish commander Alptegin. He wanted the latter to take charge of the newly introduced Turkish element in the Fāṭimid army. Nonetheless, the manner in which the Fāṭimid sovereign treated Alptegin was certainly more humane than was customary at the time. This is borne out by the fact that even non-partisan historians such as Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn Khallikān make a special note of al-ʿAzīz's clemency towards Alptegin.<sup>63</sup>

Another noteworthy example of al-ʿAzīz's forgiving nature is elucidated by Ibn al-Athīr. Before mentioning the actual incident, the historian states that al-ʿAzīz was fond of forgiving and often did so. He then cites the case of the Egyptian poet al-Ḥasan b. Bashshār al-Dimashqī who wrote many defamatory poems in al-ʿAzīz's time.<sup>64</sup> The poet satirised al-ʿAzīz's vizier, Yaʿqūb b. Killis, and his kātib al-Inshā' (secretary), Abū Naṣr ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥusain al-Qairawānī, in the following verses:

Say to Abū Naṣr, the scribe of the palace  
who has the ability to ruin the [entire] situation,

"Destroy the prop of the king, [who is] the vizier,  
 and you will be greatly praised and thanked for it.  
 Give and take and fear none, because  
 the master of the palace is not in the palace  
 He does not know what is happening  
 Even if he does know, he does not know [what to do]".

When Ibn Killis heard these verses, he is reported to have complained about the poet to al-ʿAzīz. The latter replied, "He has satirised us both so let us share in forgiving him." Al-Ḥasan then composed some more lines alluding to the Fāṭimid sovereign, his vizier and the commander of the Syrian forces at the time, al-Faḍl b. Šāliḥ. He said:

Become a Christian, for Christianity is the true religion.  
 The signs of our times prove that.  
 So pronounce the three in reverence and humility  
 And abandon all the others for they deserve neglect,  
 For Yaʿqūb the vizier is the father,  
 while al-ʿAzīz is the son and Faḍl is the holy spirit.

By this time, reports Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn Killis resented al-Ḥasan. He complained bitterly to al-ʿAzīz about the poet. Al-ʿAzīz, however, restrained his vizier from taking any action against the poet and told him, on the contrary, to forgive him. So Ibn Killis had no other recourse but to do so. Meanwhile the poet became bolder in his satirising of the Fāṭimid sovereign and his chief advisors:

Ziyārajī<sup>65</sup> the confidant and Kulaysī<sup>66</sup> the vizier  
 Yes, indeed, each dog has a collar to match his status.

These verses proved to be the last straw for Ibn Killis. He went at once to al-ʿAzīz and said:

There is no point in forgiving like this, for by it the prestige of the administration and the awe of kingship are diminished. He has spoken of you, of me and of Ibn Ribāh, your confidant. He has abused you by his [above-mentioned]

words.

The poet was immediately arrested by the vizier. Despite the poet's brazenness, the Fāṭimid Caliph decided to have him released. He accordingly summoned al-Ḥasan to his presence. The spies of the vizier at al-ʿAzīz's court informed forthwith their master of the Caliph's chosen course of action. Hence, by the time the Caliph's messenger arrived at the prison to fetch al-Ḥasan, the latter's head had been severed at the express orders of the vizier. When al-ʿAzīz heard of the poet's death, he grieved for him.<sup>67</sup>

#### VII ii Sense of Justice

The other quality which historians attribute to al-ʿAzīz is his keen sense of justice. Throughout al-ʿAzīz's twenty-one years' reign can be found episodes that clearly reveal his acute concern with justice. In the very first year of al-ʿAzīz's Caliphate, on 25 Jumādā II 365/1 March 976, the Fāṭimid governor of the Maghrib, Amīr Abu'l-Futūḥ sent, among other gifts, a sum exceeding four hundred thousand dinars to the Caliph at the hands of Muḥammad b. Šāliḥ, who was in charge of the bait al-māl. Al-ʿAzīz, however, refused to accept the money and ordered that it was to be immediately returned to the Maghrib.

According to the two historians who report this incident at length, Ibn al-ʿIdhārī and al-Maqrīzī, the Fāṭimid Caliph's vexation over the matter lay with the manner in which the money

had been collected in the Maghrib.<sup>68</sup> They recount that after ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Kātib had read the sijill he had received from al-ʿAzīz proclaiming the latter's succession to the Fāṭimid Caliphate and had distributed the dinars and dirhams that bore the new ruler's stamp on them among the people of the land, he spread his cloak, put a few dinars in it himself and then announced: "Let each one put in this cloak what he can." He made most of the people of Ifrīqiya and all its chieftains contribute to this collection. He thus managed to muster a prodigal amount exceeding four hundred thousand dinars. ʿAbd Allāh then sent the money to the Fāṭimid Caliph, anticipating that the Caliph would be rather pleased with him.

Al-ʿAzīz, to the contrary, disapproved totally of what ʿAbd Allāh had done. He therefore ordered the kātib to return the money to its original owners. ʿAbd Allāh, however, could not bring himself to return the money. He consequently devised a plan to circumvent embarrassment for himself. He placed the money in packets and on each of these he wrote the name of the person who had donated it. He then sent the packets to Cairo. Al-ʿAzīz was not to be appeased. He sent all those bags that were labelled to their owners in the Maghrib. He further instructed that the money which did not bear its owner's name should also be sent to the Maghrib, where its owners were to be traced and the money returned to them. Al-ʿAzīz's firm refusal to accept money that had been collected unlawfully is particularly commendable, for when this money was presented to the Fāṭimid Caliph, he was in the midst of equipping



a massive army to fight against Alptegin in Syria.<sup>69</sup> The vast sum of money offered to him would have consequently been of immediate use to him.<sup>70</sup> This was not a lone incident of al-ʿAzīz's lofty sense of justice.

In Dhu'l-Ḥijja 377/March 988, the twelfth year of al-ʿAzīz's rule, a foreign merchant who used to reside in the Qaisārīya market of the Ikhshīdid quarter<sup>71</sup> at Fustāṭ, was murdered in his own house and his possessions were stolen.<sup>72</sup> The next morning the chief of al-shurṭa al-suflā (the lower police),<sup>73</sup> Rāshiq, a ghulām of Maimūn Dibba, arrested a number of people who lived in the vicinity of the Qaisārīya al-Ikhshīd. The people accused Rāshiq of murdering the merchant and stealing his property. He then attempted to camouflage his crime by issuing false charges against some local residents and arresting them. The matter was brought to al-ʿAzīz's attention.

The Fāṭimid sovereign was most upset at this breach of peace. He immediately wrote a tauqīʿ to his vizier Yaʿqūb b. Killis urging the latter to investigate the matter promptly and thoroughly. The Caliph instructed his vizier to imprison those policemen who were guilty of committing the crime, and appoint in their stead upright and God-fearing individuals. Ibn Killis complied with al-ʿAzīz's orders and accordingly dismissed Rāshiq and other guilty ones from the police force. So impressed were the Egyptians of the time by the ideals of justice that their ruler put into practice that, according to Ibn Ṣairafī,



All the Egyptians made copies of this tauqī<sup>c</sup> [of al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz] and the children were taught it at school...<sup>74</sup>

The Fāṭimid Caliph's desire to be just even pervaded his personal affairs. In 383/993 recounts al-Maqrīzī, al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz inspected matters pertaining to his own income and expenditure.<sup>75</sup> The first item that he examined concerned his own household, kitchen and food expenditure. So shocked was he by the extravagant amounts<sup>76</sup> spent in this category that he exclaimed, "I am full while the people are hungry." After this episode, despite his extreme fondness for rare and exquisite dishes, he, "almost abandoned eating at the royal table."<sup>77</sup>

Ibn Sa<sup>c</sup>īd quotes an account given by the chief of the bait al-māl in al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz's time, Abū Ja<sup>c</sup>far Muḥammad b. Ḥusain b. Muḥadhdhab which provides yet another glimpse of al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz's sense of fairmindedness.<sup>78</sup> Ibn Muḥadhdhab once wrote to al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz seeking his opinion on whether to loan the Fāṭimid Caliph's money to any of the people working under him, including scribes, provincial governors and other employees of the state who sought loans from him. Al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz replied to him:

O Muḥammad, peace be upon you. If any of your people, your scribes, your treasurers or those who are working with you, or any of our slaves or those who depend upon us, ask for a loan, and you see that they are genuinely in need of it, and you are certain of their sincerity then give them what you think is appropriate, and take their signatures. Do not demand back the money from them. If they return the money voluntarily, take it from them. If they do not do so and you know that they cannot afford to do so, then forgive them the delay in returning what they had taken. If they ask for more than what you have given them, then give them it on the same conditions and do not ask for it. If you know that someone who has taken the money is able to return what he has received but is not doing so, refrain from demanding it back

from him, and refuse [to give money] to those who are like him.<sup>79</sup>

Al-ʿAzīz was equally mindful of the economic needs of members of the poorer section of society. Accordingly, he instituted the practice of paying his own servants and slaves every single day.<sup>80</sup>

#### VII iii Humane Disposition

Al-ʿAzīz's humanitarian approach extended to all levels of society. Besides taking care of the economic necessities of his slaves, he willingly granted freedom to any of his ten thousand slaves, who sought to be freed.<sup>81</sup>

The Fāṭimid Caliph's benevolent nature was clearly manifest, for instance in 373/983, when he continued to pay for all the personal charitable works of his vizier Yaʿqūb b. Killis, while the latter had been put in prison. Al-Maqrīzī states that the charities amounted to one thousand dinars per month.<sup>82</sup> When his erstwhile vizier died, it was al-ʿAzīz who personally paid off his vizier's debts worth sixteen thousand dinars.<sup>83</sup>

#### VII iv Pastimes

As an individual the Fāṭimid al-ʿAzīz had some recreational pastimes of which he was particularly fond and at which he excelled. Al-ʿAzīz was known to have been an excellent judge of horses and predatory birds.<sup>84</sup> His interest in falconry prompted

an author of the time to dedicate a treatise on the subject, called Kitāb al-Baizara, to al-ʿAzīz.<sup>85</sup> The Fāṭimid Caliph used to also indulge in pigeon racing. Ibn Ṣāfir narrates one such incident of pigeon racing in which both the Caliph al-ʿAzīz's pigeons and those of his vizier, Ibn Killis, took part. It so happened that the vizier's pigeons returned to the base prior to those of his master's. Some of the vizier's opponents took this opportunity to criticise the vizier. They wrote to al-ʿAzīz that Ibn Killis was seeking to be superior to the Caliph in all respects, and that he was acting on that principle even in pastimes such as pigeon racing. When Ibn Killis became aware of this negative propaganda against him, he at once wrote a couplet to al-ʿAzīz:

Say to the Amīr al-Mu'minīn  
 who has the majesty, and who is a model of eminence:  
 "Your bird is a winner,  
 But he does not arrive unless he has a hājib  
 (chamberlain)"<sup>86</sup>

Another hobby for which al-ʿAzīz was reputed to have a passionate penchant was lion hunting. Al-Maqrīzī gives a graphic account of al-ʿAzīz's hunting trip to Giza in 383/993. On his return from the hunt, remarks al-Maqrīzī, the Caliph entered the city of Cairo preceded by a lion which lay on a mule.<sup>87</sup> Among the Fāṭimid sovereign's other sporting interests was javelin throwing. He was the first of the Fāṭimids to throw a javelin which had a curved end. He was also regarded as the first of his family members to cast arrows.<sup>88</sup>

Al-ʿAzīz was extremely fond of all types of novelties.



Consequently a number of different species of birds, animals and fish were to be found in his reign which historians claim were never seen either before or after al-ʿAzīz's time.<sup>89</sup> Even the ships built in his time surpassed all others in size, strength and beauty.<sup>90</sup> The Fāṭimid Caliph was reckoned to be a connoisseur in jewellery and furniture. Rare and precious gems were to be found in his collection. He was an innovator of fashion. He was the first of the Fāṭimid Caliphs to clothe himself in a kaftan and a belt. He was also the first of them to don a long turban, one end of which was at the back and the other one was wrapped round the chin. It was one hundred arms' length long.<sup>91</sup> The superb quality of cloth that was produced in the various towns of Egypt and the exquisite embroidery done on them in the royal workshops bear testimony to the Caliph's interest in these items and his financial capacity to do so.<sup>92</sup>

## VII v Poetry

The Fāṭimid sovereign al-ʿAzīz's esteem of literature will be highlighted in a later chapter entitled: "The religious policy of al-ʿAzīz: the Ismāʿīlīs".<sup>93</sup> In addition to being a generous patron of literature, al-ʿAzīz also possessed literary merit himself. Ibn Khallikān quotes al-Muṣabbiḥī as saying that al-ʿAzīz "was a man of talent, and skilled in literature",<sup>94</sup> while Ibn Taghrī Birdī pays tribute to al-ʿAzīz's composition by saying that the Fāṭimid Caliph composed fine poetry.<sup>95</sup> Abū Maṣṣūr al-Thaʿālibī mentions some poetry of al-ʿAzīz in his literary work

Yatīmat al-Dahr fī Shuʿarā' ahl al-ʿAṣr.<sup>96</sup> Both Ibn Khallikān and Ibn Taghrī Birdī quote some verses from the Yatīma which al-ʿAzīz is reckoned to have composed when a son of his died on the day of ʿĪd.

We, the Banū Muṣṭafā face suffering  
 We drink from the suffering of life but make no show of  
 it.  
 Our suffering is distinct from that of all mankind.  
 The first among us were afflicted by it and so will the  
 last of us  
 All of mankind rejoices on this occasion of ʿĪd  
 but festivals for us are occasions of bereavement.<sup>97</sup>

#### VII vi Patron of architecture

The Fāṭimid ruler al-ʿAzīz's keen interest in architecture is clearly evident from the impressive array of buildings that were erected in his reign. His generous patronage of structures of a religious nature will be discussed in greater detail elsewhere.<sup>98</sup> The Caliph's patronage also extended, however, to buildings of a social, economic and recreational nature. A number of militarily strategic constructions were also undertaken in his time.

The best known of the royal edifices which al-ʿAzīz commissioned were the Qaṣr al-Baḥr and the Qaṣr al-Dhahab.<sup>99</sup> So impressed was the historian al-Muṣabbiḥī by the former palace that he remarked that it was,

an edifice, the like of which had never been raised either in the East or in the West.<sup>100</sup>

In keeping with his refined taste for aesthetic objects, the

Caliph had gardens laid at Sardūs and fountains constructed in the jāmiʿ al-ʿAtīq.<sup>101</sup> For the comfort of his subjects al-ʿAzīz had baths built in Cairo.<sup>102</sup> On the military front, al-ʿAzīz had a number of castles built, for instance, at ʿAin Shams. He also commissioned the construction of a fort at al-Rasiyīn and an arsenal at Maqs.<sup>103</sup>

In order to facilitate agriculture in his time, the Fāṭimid sovereign ordered the construction of a number of dams and aqueducts. In addition, the existing canal system was improved upon by making the canals wider and deeper. A watchtower was also constructed on the khalīj so as to gauge exactly the ebb and flow of the river Nile.<sup>104</sup> Regular inspection tours, conducted by the Caliph personally, acted as a further impetus to the smooth functioning of the irrigation network.<sup>105</sup>

### VIII Prosperity

That there was prosperity in al-ʿAzīz's time is attested by all the chroniclers who report on his reign.<sup>106</sup> The historian who has given the longest and, by far, the most thorough account of al-ʿAzīz's activities, al-Maqrīzī, describes his reign as being a model one. He adds that all the days in al-ʿAzīz's time were like days of ʿĪd and of wedding festivals.<sup>107</sup> Ibn Taghrī Birdī echoes the sentiments expressed by al-Maqrīzī. In his résumé of al-ʿAzīz he states,

I say that he was the best of the Fāṭimid Caliphs, in comparison to his father al-Muʿizz li-dīn Allāh and his son al-Ḥākim bi amrillāh.<sup>108</sup>

#### IX Evaluation of Sources on al-ʿAzīz's biography

Such is the descriptive reconstruction of al-ʿAzīz's biography based on the extant sources. The most important question that needs to be addressed, when analysing the biography of al-ʿAzīz, concerns the evaluation of source material. The criticism that can be levelled at the above account of al-ʿAzīz is that it is more of a panegyric than the actual reality.

The first point that must be made in this connection is that the basis of all the information imparted above are the works of historians of repute such as Ibn Zāfir (born 565/1171), Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233), Ibn Khallikān (wrote 672/1234), al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1441) and Ibn Taghrī Birdī (874/1470).<sup>109</sup> None of these writers, moreover, can be deemed to have had any ulterior motives in presenting the Fāṭimids in a particularly favourable light, for they all wrote their works well after the dynasty had lost all political authority. Furthermore they were all Sunnī.

The fact that in dealing with al-ʿAzīz these historians were reporting on a sovereign whose reign occurred much earlier than their own times leads to another issue - that of the examination of their sources. Well known is the fact that medieval historians were notorious for not mentioning their sources of information.



In the case of al-ʿAzīz, however, the problem is not quite as acute. The chroniclers often name the historian contemporary to al-ʿAzīz, al-Muṣabbiḥī,<sup>110</sup> as their primary source.

That al-Muṣabbiḥī was a Fāṭimid sympathiser is no secret. Yet, purely on that basis, any information reported by him cannot automatically be labelled as being biased. Moreover, authors such as the ones mentioned above gathered their information from a variety of sources. Just because they do not many a time name the actual author in their narrative does not discount the fact that they referred to them.<sup>110</sup> In addition, from time to time the chroniclers cited above give their own evaluation of al-ʿAzīz. Information imparted in these conclusions has also been utilised in forming as complete a picture of al-ʿAzīz's life and his interests.

The final argument that needs to be discussed in this connection concerns the location within the sources of the various attributes and qualities of al-ʿAzīz that seem to paint a rather flattering image of this particular Fāṭimid ruler. Some of the favourable sentiments expressed concerning al-ʿAzīz are to be found in obituaries written on him by various historians. It is undoubtedly correct to assume that no writer would say unpleasant things about a ruler in the latter's obituary. It would then follow that the accounts in an individual's obituary, although not totally false, may be highly exaggerated, with the negative aspects of the person glossed over. The validity of this argument

is beyond question. Yet, the case of al-ʿAzīz is perhaps an exception to the rule. This is clearly proven by the fact that the majority of the anecdotes that have been cited and discussed in the text have been taken from the year by year account of the various historians. Even the information found in biographical works such as Ibn Khallikān's Wafayāt al-ʿAyan are corroborated by the more detailed narratives of other authorities before being included in the text.

It must also be noted that the various qualities that historians have showered on al-ʿAzīz do not merely form a part of the hollow rhetoric used for all powerful potentates. A comparison of Ibn Khallikān's portrayal of another great Fāṭimid statesman, al-Muʿizz, with that of his son and successor al-ʿAzīz, clearly reveals a distinction in the personalities of the two men. Nor does Ibn Khallikān even attempt to attribute the same qualities to the two sovereigns. It is of course to be expected that all renowned rulers will have some qualities in common, but this is just where the similarities come to an end. In the final analysis, each ruler, like each man, is an individual in his own right. It is the portrayal of the individual, al-ʿAzīz, that has been attempted in this chapter.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 236; Khiṭaṭ, II, 284; Wafayāt, III, 529; al-Duwal, 38; Ibn Muyassar gives the date of birth as 11 Muḥarram 344/8 May 955 in his Ta'rīkh, 47; whereas Ibn al-Dawādārī (Kanz, VI: al-Durra, 174) says it was on 23 Muḥarram/20 May that al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz was born. Ibn Taghrī Birdī (al-Nujūm, 1, mentions that al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz was born on the day of <sup>ʿ</sup>Ashūrā', that is, 10 Muḥarram 344/7 May 955.
2. Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 236; Khiṭaṭ II, 318. In his later work (II, 285) al-Maqrīzī calls her Durzāra (دُرْزَارَة). Because of her melodious voice she was also known as Taghrīd (warbling) (Cf. Y. Ragib "Sur Deux Monuments Funéraires du Cimetière d'al-Qarafa" as cited by Bloom, "Meaning", p. 125.
3. Al-Nujūm, 1; Khiṭaṭ, II, 284; Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz I, 134; Wafayāt, III, 380.
4. Ibn Muyassar, Ta'rīkh, 46; Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 217; al-Duwal, 26, 31. The exact nature of the illness is not specified in the sources.
5. On Tamīm b. al-Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>izz see: Wafayāt, I, 279-81; Ibn al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Abbār, Kitāb al-Ḥullat al-Sayrā' I. Ed. Ḥusain Mu'nīs (Cairo, 1963), 291-8; Dīwān Tamīm b. Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>izz. Ed. M. K. Ḥusain et. al., (Cairo, 1957). Introduction; A. Tāmīr, Tamīm al-Fāṭimī (Beirut, 1982) Introduction. The later generally repeats information on Tamīm from the former; J. Walker, "Tamīm b. al-Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>izz" E.1<sup>1</sup>, IV, 646.
6. Wafayāt, I, 279.
7. Op. cit.; 291. Ibn al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Abbār cites Jauhar al-Siqqilī as his source for this piece of information.
8. Op. cit., p. 9 (of the introduction).
9. Al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz's heir, al-Ḥākim, was born on Thursday 23 Rabī<sup>ʿ</sup> I 375/13 August 985. Cf. al-Duwal, 13; Ibn Muyassar, Ta'rīkh, 52; Wafayāt, III, 453; al-Durra, 215; al-Bayān, 241; Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, 292; Khiṭaṭ, II, 285; Idrīs, Uvūn, VI, 248, places al-Ḥākim's birth on 3 or 4 Rabī<sup>ʿ</sup> I 375/31 July or 1 August 985.
10. Dīwān, ed. Ḥusain, pp. 5-6 (of the Introduction).
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. On Jawdhar see his Sīra composed by a scribe called Abū <sup>ʿ</sup>Alī Maṣṣūr al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīzī al-Jawdhārī in al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz's time. The Sīra



- has been edited by M. K. Ḥusain and M. A. Shaʿīra (Cairo, 1954). It has also been translated into French by M. Canard in the Journal de l'Institut d'Études Orientales de la Faculté des Lettres d'Alger (1958).
14. Dīwān, 6-7 (of the Introduction).
  15. Ibid.
  16. Sīrat Jawdhar, p. 139, (Canard's trans.)
  17. Perhaps ḥarīm influence had a role to play in that, for Tamīm was a great favourite of the women of the court. Cf. Dīwān Tamīm, Introduction, pp. 8-9 and Sīrat Jawdhar, 139-40.
  18. Ittiʿāz, I, 203.
  19. To this his own Dīwān as well as works of writers who have quoted his work, bear witness. See, for instance, Al-Thaʿālibī, Yatīmat al-Daḥr fī Shuʿarā' ahl al-ʿAsr (Damascus, n.d.) 2 vols. Idrīs, ʿUyūn, VI, 202-48; Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt, III, 279-81; Ibn al-ʿAbbār, al-Ḥulla, I, 291-7.
  20. For Tamīm's eulogies on various occasions of significance in al-ʿAzīz's reign, see Idrīs, ʿUyūn, VI, 202-48. Al-Maqrīzī, Ittiʿāz, I, mentions various incidents that reveal, that on the whole, a cordial relationship existed between the two brothers. When Tamīm died, funeral prayers for him were recited in al-ʿAzīz's garden at which the Caliph was present. Cf. Wafayāt, II, 280. It is, however, noteworthy, that al-ʿAzīz did not personally lead the funeral prayers over his elder brother.
  21. Sīrat Jawdhar, pp. 23-4.
  22. According to the other group, the Mūsāwīya who later came to be known as the Ithnā ʿAshariya, at the death of Ismāʿīl, the naṣṣ was revoked and given by Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq to his other son, Mūsā al-Kāzim. For a detailed exposition of the Ismāʿīlī stance cf. W. Madelung, "Ismāʿīliyya" E.1<sup>2</sup>, IV, 198-206; while on the Ithnā ʿAshariya see S. H. Naṣr, E.1<sup>2</sup>. IV, 277-9.
  23. The actual date of Nizār's accession ranges in the sources from 4-23 Rabīʿ II 365/11-30 December 975. On the various dates and events leading to al-Muʿizz's death and Nizār's assumption of authority, see ʿUyūn, V, 202-6; al-Duwal, 31, Al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 371; al-Bayān, 229; al-Kāmil, VIII, 488-9; Wafayāt, III, 381, 526; Ibn Muyassar, Ta'rīkh, 47-8; al-Nujūm, 1; Ittiʿāz, I, 236-7; Khiṭaṭ II, 284.
  24. Nizār's choice of the title al-ʿAzīz billāh is rather interesting. Besides being an honorific phrase that denotes



a close link with Allāh - "the one who is strengthened by God", the term ʿAzīz is specifically connected with Egypt. In the Qur'ān (XII, 30, 51), for instance, the title al-ʿAzīz is given to the unnamed Egyptian who buys Yūsuf. As pointed out by Lewis, the title al-ʿAzīz also seems to denote the office of chief minister under the Pharaoh. The same title is therefore applied to Yūsuf himself when he reaches that position (Qur'ān, XII, 78, 88). Some Arabic dictionaries, moreover, define al-ʿAzīz as meaning the ruler of Egypt (Miṣr) and Alexandria. Cf. B. Lewis, ʿAzīz Miṣr", E.1, I, 825. The fact that Nizār picked al-ʿAzīz as his honorific title is a further proof of the Fāṭimid intention, from the very beginning, to make Egypt their permanent abode. For a well-researched work on this issue see Heck, op. cit.

25. On the significance of the mizalla in Fāṭimid ceremonials, see Sanders, op. cit.
26. Ittiʿāz, I, 237; ʿUyūn, V, 206.
27. Idrīs, ʿUyūn, VI, 207. Verses 1-3, 6, 8-11 of the poem have been included in the text. For the original Arabic verses see Appendix A. The two ʿIds that the poet makes reference to are the ʿId al-Nahr and the occasion of al-ʿAzīz's accession to the Caliphate.
28. Perhaps in this verse the poet's adoption of a dual ending is just a matter of style.
29. It is well known that the lion symbolises royalty. It may well be that the two cubs symbolise spiritual and material authority.
30. The use of the dual for Muhammad is perhaps just a matter of style here. It may, however, be an allusion to the spiritual and material aspects of the Prophet.
31. Bearing in mind that the poet is addressing the poem to al-ʿAzīz who is both an Ismāʿīl Imām and a Fāṭimid Caliph, the two languages allude to the zāhir (exoteric knowledge) and the bāṭin (esoteric wisdom).
32. The reference to both hands of a person being right hands is a common metaphor in Islamic poetry and titulature. What it means is that the person to whom the poem is addressed is very generous, for generosity is regarded as a quality of the right hand. It also denotes strength and good fortune.
33. Idrīs, ʿUyūn, VI, 208-10. The verses included in the text are 26-29, 34-6 and 42 on pp. 209-10. For the original Arabic verses see Appendix A.

34. This line has been taken from the Qur'ān, XCIX: 2. It signifies the end of the world.
35. Ibn Muyassar, Ta'rīkh, 48; Itti'āz, I, 236-7.
36. For references of exact page numbers to these writers' works, see n. 23.
37. Itti'āz, I, 252.
38. See N. A. Koenig, "al-ʿAzīz billāh", E.1<sup>1</sup>, I, 541, and M. Canard, E.1<sup>2</sup>, I, 823 and their references.
39. Cf. note 9 for various references on al-Ḥākim's birth.
40. Itti'āz, I, 292; Ibn Muyassar, Ta'rīkh, 51; for Saʿīdat al-Mulk's involvement in the Caliphate of al-Ḥākim see Ibn Zāfir, al-Duwal, 57-8.
41. For details on this incident see Ch. IV, section III, iv, "A Christian vizier - the case of ʿIsā b. Nestorius".
42. Itti'āz, I, 288-9.
43. Ibid.
44. Ta'rīkh, 415.
45. Ibn Muyassar, Ta'rīkh, 50.
46. Wafayāt, III, 449; Idrīs, ʿUyūn, VI, 243-4. Idrīs, ʿUyūn, 245-7 also records a qaṣīda (poem) recited on al-Ḥākim's appointment as walī ʿahd by al-Iskandar.
47. Itti'āz, I, 279.
48. Ibid, 281, 283.
49. Ibid, 288.
50. Itti'āz, I, 291; Ibn Muyassar, Tārīkh, 50; Wafayāt, III, 528; al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 450; al-Kāmil, IX, 81; Ibn Taghrī Birdī (al-Nujūm, 10-11) gives three different places and three different versions of al-ʿAzīz's death.
51. Ibn Khallikān, (Wafayāt, III, 528) mentions that Ibn ʿAmmār was the first Maghribī officer to have been conferred with an honorary title.
52. De Slane's trans. Wafayāt, III, 529; see also al-Nujūm, 12.
53. See references cited in note 50. See also, Ibn Zāfir, al-Duwal, 42; Ibn al-Qalānisī Dhail, 42-44; Abu'l-Fida', al-Mukhtaṣar, II, 130-1; Ibn al-Dawādārī, Kanz, 238; Idrīs (ʿUyūn, VI 247) is the only historian who places al-ʿAzīz's

death on 12 Ramaḍān 386/30 September 996. There may be two possible explanations for this exception - either it is an error made by one of the copyists or as Idrīs was writing almost three centuries after the event, he might have become a little confused about the correct date. It must be said, though, that on the whole Idrīs provides useful information on al-ʿAzīz.

54. De Slane's trans. Wafayāt, III, 529. Slight changes have been made in the style, for example, "shewed" has been changed to "showed" and "khalif" to "Caliph", etc. Cf. also, Ittiʿāz, I, 291-2.
55. Ta'rīkh, 48, 51; for variants to the figures given by Ibn al-Muyassar see references cited in footnotes 50 and 53.
56. Al-Kāmil, IX, 81; Wafayāt, III, 526; Idrīs, ʿUyūn, VI 210; Ibn Zāfir, al-Duwal, 42; Ibn Muyassar, Ta'rīkh, 51, Ittiʿāz, I, 292; al-Nujūm, 2.
57. Al-Nujūm, 10. Also see pp. 1-2.
58. See for example Idrīs, ʿUyūn, VI, 210; Wafayāt, III, 526; Ibn al-Qalānīsī, Dhail, 20-1.
59. Ittiʿāz, I, 245. On Alptegin see also Wafayāt, II, 483; Ibn al-Qalānīsī, Dhail, 19-20; Idrīs, ʿUyūn, VI, 223; al-Kāmil, VIII, 487.
60. Al-Kāmil, VIII, 487.
61. Ittiʿāz, I, 245; see also Khiṭaṭ, II, 284.
62. Ibid, 244; Khiṭaṭ, II, 284.
63. Al-Kāmil, VIII, 487; Wafayāt, III, 526.
64. Al-Kāmil, IX, 82-3. See also al-Maqrīzī, Ittiʿāz, I, 297-8, where the author gives the full account, quoting it from Ibn al-Athīr and acknowledging the latter as his source of information. For the original Arabic verses of al-Dimashquī see Appendix A.
65. Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, IX, 82, gives al-ʿAzīz's confidant's name as Ibn Ḥibāraj.
66. Kulaysī is a diminutive form of Killis. It must have been chosen by the poet to derogate the vizier, Ibn Killis.
67. Al-Kāmil, IX, 82.
68. Al-Bayān, I, 230; Ittiʿāz, I, 247-8.



69. For references to Alptegin's activities in Syria, see note 59.
70. In fact, that is exactly what al-ʿAzīz's astute vizier Yaqūb b. Killis advised him to do. He said, "This is a large sum of money and we need it to support our army. When you come back [from Syria] you can return this amount of money to the bait al-māl." Eventually al-ʿAzīz agreed to utilise the money that did not have its owners' names marked on it, temporarily, until his return from the battlefield. Cf. Ittiʿāz, I, 248.
71. This was a quarter where the cloth merchants used to reside. It was located behind the jāmiʿ al-ʿAtīq, which was formerly known as jāmiʿ ʿAmr b. al-ʿAṣ. Cf. Ittiʿāz, I, 264.
72. Ibn al-Ṣairafī as quoted by al-Maqrīzī, Ittiʿāz, I, 264-6.
73. The shurṭa comprised of soldiers who maintained peace in the city. The chief of the shurṭa was second in rank to the governor of the city. Cf. Ittiʿāz, I, 265, fn. 1. On shurṭa see also K. V. Zetteerstéén, E.1<sup>I</sup>. IV, 393.
74. Ibn al-Sairāfī as quoted by al-Maqrīzī, Ittiʿāz, I, 266.
75. Ittiʿāz, I, 277.
76. Al-Maqrīzī, Ittiʿāz, I, 295, says that "the expenses of his kitchens and meals amounted to very large sums of money."
77. Ittiʿāz, I, 277.
78. Ibn Saʿīd quotes from Kitāb Sīrat al-Aiṣma by Ibn Muhadhdhab. Al-Maqrīzī has incorporated the full report in his Ittiʿāz, I, 296.
79. Ittiʿāz, I, 296.
80. Ibid, 295.
81. Ibn al-Qalānisī, Dhail, 44-5; Ittiʿāz, I, 295.
82. Ittiʿāz, I, 262,
83. Ibid, 269.
84. Al-Muṣabbiḥī as reported by Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt, III, 526; Ittiʿāz, I, 292; Al-Muṣabbiḥī as reported by Ibn Muyassar, Taʾrīkh, 51; Ibn Zāfir, al-Duwal, 42; al-Kāmil, IX, 81.
85. The work was edited by M. Kurd ʿAlī (Damascus, 1953). A French translation of the work was prepared by François Viré (Leiden, 1967).



86. Ibn Zāfir, al-Duwal, 30. For the original Arabic version of the couplet see Appendix A.
87. Ittiʿāz, I, 277.
88. Ittiʿāz, I, 293-4; Khiṭāṭ, II, 284.
89. Ibn Zāfir, al-Duwal, 13-14, 35-7, gives a detailed account of the various types of novelties that were found in al-ʿAzīz's reign. André Ferré, the editor of Ibn Zāfir's al-Duwal remarks that it is very likely indeed that Ibn Zāfir took the above information from al-Muṣabbiḥī.
90. Ittiʿāz, I, 295; al-Duwal, 38.
91. Ittiʿāz, I, 293-4; Khiṭāṭ, II, 284; in Ibn Muyassar, (Taʾrīkh, 51) is to be found an example of how well al-ʿAzīz used to dress.
92. Al-Duwal, 35.
93. Chapter 3, section II, ii, 3, "The Royal Palace - a repository of knowledge."
94. Wafayāt, III, 526; in an article on Tamīm b. al-Muʿizz, (Wafayāt, I, 279), Ibn Khallikān states that "al-ʿAzīz also composed some good poetry".
95. Al-Nujūm, II, 10.
96. Idrīs, ʿUyūn, VI, 200, ascribes the lines to al-Muʿizz.
97. Al-Nujūm, II, 2; Wafayāt, III, 526. Ibn Khallikān's version varies slightly from that of Ibn Taghrī Birdī. It is the latter's version that has been translated in the chapter. For the original Arabic verses see Appendix A.
98. See Chapter 3, section I, ii, 7, "Building of Religious Structures".
99. Wafayāt, III, 526; al-Nujūm, II, 1-2, Ittiʿāz, I, 294; al-Duwal, 37.
100. Both Ibn Khallikān (Wafayāt, III, 526) and Ibn Taghrī Birdī (al-Nujūm, II, 1) quote the remark of al-Muṣabbiḥī.
101. Al-Duwal, 37; Ittiʿāz, I, 294. None of the historians mentions any detail about the gardens at Sardūs. Concerning the mosque of al-ʿAtiq see Khiṭāṭ, II, 246-252, Creswell, "The Mosque of ʿAmr", BIFAO, XXXII (1932), 121-66.
102. Ittiʿāz, I, 295; al-Duwal, 37.

103. Al-Duwal, 37; Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 295. On the dār al-Ṣanā<sup>ʿ</sup>a see reference cited by the editors of both the works mentioned.
104. Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 295; al-Duwal, 37-8.
105. Khitat, II, 470, 493. Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 271, 275, 278, 283.
106. Wafayāt, III, 526-9; al-Nujūm, II, 1; Ibn al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Abbār, Kitāb al-Ḥulla, I, 296-7; al-Duwal, 35-38, 42; al-Kāmil, VIII, 489; Idrīs, ʿUyūn, VI, 205.
107. Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 297. Al-Maqrīzī quotes al-Qurtī's words.
108. Al-Nujūm, II, 10.
109. On all these historians see the relevant articles in the E.1<sup>2</sup> and references cited there.
110. On al-Muṣabbiḥī see the introduction to Akḥbār Miṣr ed. Ayman Fuad Sayyid and Thierry Bianquis (Cairo, 1978).
111. Al-Maqrīzī (Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 296-7) for instance also quotes information from Ibn Sa<sup>ʿ</sup>īd, Ibn Muḥadhdhab and al-Qurtī. Unfortunately, hardly any information is available on these writers.

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE RELIGIOUS POLICY OF AL-ʿAZĪZ: THE ISMĀʿĪLĪS

Islam, as is well known, provides a complete code of life for its adherents. It does not as such distinguish between "church" and "state". The Fāṭimid sovereigns embraced this all-encompassing precept of Islam. Accordingly, they claimed to provide guidance on matters temporal and spiritual. In fact, they went a step further. They asserted that they were the sole inheritors of spiritual and temporal authority in Islam. So concerned were they with the propagation of the religious aspect of their sovereignty that, for the first time in Islamic annals, they elevated the organization responsible for the dissemination of their religious mission (the daʿwa) to a pillar of state.<sup>1</sup> The daʿwa thus operated alongside the twin pillars of civil bureaucracy and the military forces. The Fāṭimids claimed that the raison d'être of their state was to remove the injustice that prevailed in the world and to fill it with justice. In other words, the cornerstone of their political authority was based on religious ideals. The Fāṭimids professed to be the Imāms (spiritual guides) of the Ismāʿīlī branch of Shīʿism. Accordingly, upon their accession to political authority both in the Maghrib and in Egypt, they elevated Ismāʿīlism to the position of a state religion.

This chapter will discuss the religious policies of the fifth Fāṭimid sovereign, al-ʿAzīz billāh. As the Ismāʿīlī Imām of his time, al-ʿAzīz was at the apex of the religious structure. The impetus given to Ismāʿīlism by al-ʿAzīz within Fāṭimid domains will be examined. Ismāʿīlism also flourished under the auspices of its duʿāt (emissaries) in territories that were not under direct Fāṭimid control but which, nonetheless, formally acknowledged Fāṭimid suzerainty, such as the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina, parts of the Yemen, Mosul, Mūltān and others. The promotion of Ismāʿīlism by al-ʿAzīz through its duʿāt will also be analysed.

What this chapter will not attempt is an elucidation of Fāṭimid doctrines. This is for a number of reasons. Firstly, because doctrines, being modes of thought rather than actual sequences of events, although they are subject to change, cannot be compartmentalised into a fixed chronological period of time, such as, for example, the reign of al-ʿAzīz. Secondly, the Fāṭimid doctrinal scene is rather involved and complex. Consequently, a study based exclusively on the topic needs to be undertaken. Finally, there are no extant treatises on Ismāʿīlī doctrines by the outstanding figures of the daʿwa in al-ʿAzīz's time whose views could be summarised to give a flavour of the prevalent doctrinal systems.<sup>2</sup> A basic understanding of Fāṭimid doctrines can be culled, however, from the existing studies on the subject.<sup>3</sup>



## I Ismāʿīlism

### I i Rank and role of the Imām:

A number of Fāṭimid theologians wrote treatises on the key concept of imāma in Ismāʿīlism. For example, one of the chief exponents of Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlism, al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, devotes the very first chapter of his authoritative work on Ismāʿīlī theology and law, Daʿāʾim al-Islām,<sup>4</sup> to al-wilāya (the authority of the Imāms). Al-Nuʿmān designates the wilāya as the first pillar of Ismāʿīlism, the acceptance of which is fundamental to the understanding of the rest of its precepts.<sup>5</sup> Subsequent to his composition of the Daʿāʾim, al-Nuʿmān undertook a comprehensive study of the wilāya from an esoteric point of view in his Asās al-Taʾwīl and Taʾwīl al-Daʿāʾim.<sup>6</sup> It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss at length the doctrinal aspect of the concept of imāma. A basic understanding of the Ismāʿīlī position vis-a-vis its Imām can be ascertained, however, from a cogent résumé of the issue by Von Grunebaum:

He [the Fāṭimid Caliph] is descended from the Prophet through Fāṭima, the quality of Imām has been transmitted to him by a series of [divine] appointments, nass, from father to son, theoretically in an unbroken sequence of primogenitures. There is thus no power to whom he could possibly be beholden, no human contemporary who would be his equal, not merely in respect of rank but of substance. Faith, islām, in the Ismāʿīlī view is incomplete without belief in the Imām; without him the Muslim religion could be neither correct nor perfect; he is hudjdjat Allāh, the proof of Allah, on earth, that is to say, his existence is and provides testimony for God's veracity in this Revelation.<sup>7</sup>

## I ii Manifestations of the Imām's Authority

In their capacity as the Imāms of the community, the Fāṭimid Caliphs were earnestly concerned with manifesting their status as religious leaders in a variety of modes. The performance of religious duties by the Caliph, the regular observance of religious festivals, the pivotal position of the Caliph in processions, the construction of mosques with inscriptions that symbolically allude to the spiritual authority of the Fāṭimid Imām, and even the coins and regnal titles of the Fāṭimids serve to accentuate their religious authority.

### I ii 1 Leading of Prayers

The first Fāṭimid to begin his reign in Egypt, al-ʿAzīz billāh, was extremely diligent in the performance of his religious duties. From 380/980 onwards the sources offer detailed descriptions of al-ʿAzīz regularly leading the Friday prayers in "the best of months" - Ramaḍān.<sup>8</sup> Al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Ḥafir note that al-ʿAzīz was the first Fāṭimid ruler to lead the Friday prayer of Ramaḍān in person.<sup>9</sup> Al-Maqrīzī adds that al-ʿAzīz was the first Fāṭimid to break the fast of Ramaḍān with the people at the mosque of al-ʿAtīq.<sup>10</sup> The Friday prayers during Ramaḍān were not the only prayers that al-ʿAzīz led. The earnestness with which al-ʿAzīz performed his duties as an Imām can also be ascertained from the fact that he personally led the funeral prayers over important state officials such as the chief qādī ʿAlī b. al-Nuʿmān and the

vizier Ya<sup>ʿ</sup>qūb b. Killis, as well as members of his own family, for example, his wife and his mother.

## I ii 2 Processions:

Processions gave expression to the Ismā<sup>ʿ</sup>īlī system in which the Imām stood at the centre of all devotions. They were used in early Fāṭimid times in Egypt to link the major ritual centres to the Imām's palace.<sup>11</sup> The first description of a procession to the Friday prayer during Ramaḍān also dates back to al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz's time. In 380/990 al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz rode to the jāmi<sup>ʿ</sup> al-Azhar carrying a staff (qaḍīb) and wearing a taylasān and sword, under a golden parasol (mizalla). He was accompanied by five thousand men on foot. After delivering the khutba and leading the prayer, he returned to the palace, collecting grievances along the way.<sup>12</sup> This was substantially the manner in which the Ramaḍān processions were held henceforth.

## I ii 3 Celebration of <sup>ʿ</sup>Īd al-Fiṭr and <sup>ʿ</sup>Īd al-Adhā:

Al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz also actively participated in the celebration of the two canonical festivals of the Muslim calendar, <sup>ʿ</sup>Īd al-Fiṭr (the festival of the breaking of the fast of Ramaḍān) and <sup>ʿ</sup>Īd al-Adhā (the festival of sacrificing).<sup>13</sup> He headed the procession to the muṣallā,<sup>14</sup> led the <sup>ʿ</sup>Īd prayer and proclaimed the khutba. The religious ceremonies were followed by a sumptuous banquet at the royal palace. After the <sup>ʿ</sup>Īd al-Adhā prayer the Fāṭimid ruler

offered sacrifices.

As a conscientious Muslim leader, al-ʿAzīz regularly distributed alms to the poor and performed other charitable acts. He is credited by the historians as being the first Fāṭimid to build a dār al-fiṭra (warehouse of provisions) where all the charitable contributions were collected and stored.<sup>15</sup> He made it a custom to distribute al-ḡaḥayā

to the awliyāʾ according to their ranks on the day of ʿĪd.<sup>16</sup> The poor also received charity from him on that day. The Fāṭimid Imām also distributed alms on occasions of personal grief such as the times when his wife and mother died and when his heir fell seriously ill.<sup>17</sup>

An important and permanent addition to the celebration of the two festivals was introduced by al-ʿAzīz when in 380/990 he ordered the construction of benches (mastabas) along the route from the palace to the muṣallā. He ordered the believers (i.e. Ismāʿīlīs) to sit on these benches and to recite the taḡbīr (Allāh-u-Akbar), "so that it would be continuous from the palace to the muṣallā.<sup>18</sup> Sanders has rightly pointed out that from the year 380/990 the processions on the two ʿĪds and during Ramaḍān were not just a means of getting from one point to another. Rather, they were meant to connect the points as well. The mastabas sought to establish a physical link between the palace and the muṣallā, while the continuous taḡbīr was a way of sacralising the procession route.<sup>19</sup>



#### I ii 4 Relationship between Prayer and Procession:

The connection between procession and prayer is very close in terms of ta'wīl . Qāḍī al-Nuḥmān in his monumental work Da'ā'im al-Islām and his Ta'wīl al-Da'ā'im discusses this connection. He mentions that there are three major festivals: the Friday prayer (al-Jum'a), the Fiṭr and the Adhā. Each of these three has a paradigm in the bāṭin (the esoteric plane): that of the Friday prayer is the da'wa of Muḥammad, which is also the da'wa of the hidden Imāms: that of the fast of Ramaḍān, the concealment (al-kitmān wa'l-saṭr) of the fiṭr, the Maḥdī and the revealing of the hidden da'wa: that of the sacrificial feast (al-adhā), the qā'im. The Da'ā'im, moreover, prescribes that one should bring out weapons (silāḥ) to the prayer. According to the Ta'wīl al-Da'ā'im the paradigm of going out in prayer (al-khurūj li'l ṣalāt) and taking out weapons (ikhrāj al-ṣilāḥ) is like conducting a jihād against the enemy. This is explained further by the specification that the prayer on these occasions is to be held in an "open field" (al-barāz), that is, the muṣallā.<sup>20</sup>

#### I ii 5 Jihād:

Jihād (holy war) is one of the fundamental precepts of Islam. It is reckoned <sup>by some authorities</sup> to be the sixth pillar of Islam following the five obligatory religious rites that a Muslim has to perform, al-shahāda, al-ṣalāt (prayer), al-ṣaum (fasting), al-zakāt (alms-giving) and al-ḥajj (pilgrimage). Al-Nuḥmān elucidates and

interprets the Ismāʿīlī viewpoint on jihād in a chapter devoted to this topic in his Daʿā'im al-Islām. He relates, on the authority of Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir that jihād is one of the seven pillars of Ismāʿīlism. The other six are: al-walāya/wilāya (devotion to the Imām and acceptance of his authority), al-ṭahāra (ritual purity), al-ṣalāt, al-zakāt and al-ḥajj.<sup>21</sup>

As the Ismāʿīlī Imām, al-ʿAzīz was extremely conscious of his religious obligations. Accordingly, he took very seriously his duty to lead a jihād against the enemy when need be. In 385/995, for example, al-ʿAzīz heard of the Byzantine Emperor Basil II's campaign against Fāṭimid territories in Syria. He at once made preparations to march in person against the Emperor. When a number of prominent citizens of Egypt advised the Fāṭimid Caliph to remain in the capital and to send his troops instead, he expressed his gratitude at their concern for his personal safety. He insisted, however, that he had to lead his troops in person as he was "marching in aid of Islam, to defend it in Allāh's lands and to protect its people".....<sup>22</sup>

#### I ii 6 Hajj:

As the spiritual leader of the community, the Fāṭimid Caliph's rule guaranteed the performance of religious rituals. In this context the special importance that the Fāṭimids attached to the performance of the pilgrimage (ḥajj), one of the pillars of Islam, should be examined.<sup>23</sup> After extensive negotiations, diplomacy and

showering of gifts, al-Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>izz had finally managed to receive the support of the Sharīfs of the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina in 364/974-5. The following year the khutba was proclaimed at Mecca in the Fāṭimid Caliph's name.<sup>24</sup> It was a matter of great prestige for any Muslim ruler to be acknowledged as the legitimate authority from the pulpits of the holiest of Islamic cities. Al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz, therefore, made every endeavour to continue this distinction in his name. In addition, Mecca held enormous symbolic significance for the Fāṭimids as the home of the Prophet and consequently their own ancestral abode.<sup>25</sup>

Concerning the hajj itself, al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz took a number of measures to facilitate the performance of the pilgrimage by the people of his domains. He appointed the person who was to lead the qāfila (pilgrim caravan) and whose duty it was to make all the necessary arrangements for the hajj. At times he reviewed the caravans - laden with goods and gifts - himself.<sup>26</sup> He even took military action against the Bedouin of the Ḥijāz who used to intercept the pilgrim caravans and loot them. Moreover, the Fāṭimid ruler regularly sent one or two extremely beautiful and expensive black brocade coverings for the walls of the Ka<sup>ʿ</sup>ba known as the kiswa. On every pilgrimage the Caliph also sent as gifts various types of grain, oil, candles, perfumes, articles made of gold and other precious metals and stones, riding beasts and other items to Mecca.<sup>27</sup> The total cost of these offerings was estimated by al-Maqrīzī as being 100,000 dinars in 369/979. By 382/992 Ibn Muyassar valued the gifts sent by al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz to the Ka<sup>ʿ</sup>ba at 300,000

dinars.<sup>28</sup>

It is noteworthy that despite the esteem in which al-ʿAzīz seems to have regarded the Kaʿba, he did not undertake the pilgrimage personally even once in his reign. His was not a unique case either. None of the Fāṭimid Caliphs ever performed the pilgrimage whilst they reigned. This fact does not elicit surprise, however. When the annals of Islam are examined, it would appear that none of the Muslim rulers who were contemporary to the Fāṭimids - including the ʿAbbāsids and the Umayyads of Spain, embarked on a pilgrimage while they reigned.<sup>29</sup>

The major consideration that dissuaded the Muslim rulers in this decision was the issue of security. It was often regarded a matter of extreme risk for the potentate to leave his seat of authority physically. It was with this consideration in mind that rulers were also generally advised by their ministers not to lead their armed forces in war personally. This advice was regarded as crucial if the scene of battle was located at a considerable distance from the power base of the ruler.<sup>30</sup> Undertaking the pilgrimage to Mecca in person would certainly necessitate the ruler's absence from his capital for a number of weeks - a proposition that was reckoned to be very risky by the political pundits of the time.



## I ii 7 Building of Religious Structures:

Architecturally, al-ʿAzīz expressed his religious authority by embarking on a programme of constructing mosques and other religious structures such as a muṣallā built in Cairo, adjacent to the Bāb al-Naṣr.<sup>31</sup> The foundation of the jāmiʿ al-Anwār was marked out in Ramaḍān 380/November-December 990. It was the first and the most well-known of the mosques built under the auspices of al-ʿAzīz. The new jāmiʿ was two to three times the size of the previous jāmiʿ, al-Azhar.<sup>32</sup> The symbolic allusion to divine light (anwār - plural of nūr) in the naming of the mosque is particularly significant. The parable of the Light of God in a lamp in a niche (Qu'rān XXIV: 35 ff) has a very special meaning to the Shīʿa, among them the Ismāʿīlīs too, for it was taken to be evidence for the naṣṣ (designation); divine light transmitted to the successive ʿAlīd Imāms.<sup>33</sup>

The recognized holiness (baraka) of the month (Ramaḍān) in which the jāmiʿ was founded is further evidence of the religious significance that the Fāṭimid ruler attached to the construction of the mosque. Al-ʿAzīz also became the patron of a ruined mosque at Qarāfa and he had the entire mosque renovated.<sup>34</sup> So thorough and total was the reconstruction that historians, relying on the report of a contemporary historian, al-Muṣabbiḥī, list the mosque as being one of the new buildings constructed in al-ʿAzīz's time.<sup>35</sup>

As far as the functions of the Anwār mosque are concerned, historians report that no sooner was the site earmarked as a mosque than the fugahā' (jurists) who had previously lectured in the mosque of Cairo began to hold courses in the jāmi' al-Anwār too.<sup>36</sup> A year after the foundation ceremony, that is, in Ramaḍān 381/November 991, al-ʿAzīz led the Friday prayer and delivered the khutba there.<sup>37</sup> Thus, long before the construction of the mosque was completed, it was being used as a centre for both prayer and instruction. The Fāṭimid Imām ritually integrated the jāmi' al-Anwār with the existing religious centres by leading the Ramaḍān prayers alternately in the new and the old mosques for the first couple of years after the former's foundation.

#### I ii 8 Regnal Titles and Other Royal Trappings:

The Fāṭimid claim to religious authority can also be ascertained from their choice of grand regnal titles for themselves. Fāṭimid coins and other regalia provide further indications of their claims. In their adoption of titles, the Fāṭimids followed the ʿAbbāsid precedent. The first three Fāṭimid Caliphs, al-Mahdī, al-Qāʿim and al-Manṣūr, like their ʿAbbāsid counterparts, took titles of messianic and apocalyptic expectations.<sup>38</sup> Once the Fāṭimids felt politically secure they reverted to the standard form of regnal titles as the later ʿAbbāsid Caliphs had done. Bernard Lewis describes this standard form as follows:

Though [the titles were] commonly abbreviated to the first word only, they consist of an adjectival phrase, qualifying the holder and formulating a relationship to God, with whose name the formula ends ...<sup>39</sup>

It was with the fourth Fāṭimid ruler, al-Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>izz lidīn Allāh ("the one who strengthens the religion of Allāh") that this latter formula was adopted. His successor Nizār had as his laqab al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz billāh ("the one who is powerful through Allāh"). He was also known as Abū Manṣūr. As Lewis has rightly pointed out:

In medieval Islam as in medieval Christendom, the coming of a divinely guided leader, who would overthrow tyranny and "fill the world with justice" was no vague dream of a remote future, but a firm and specific promise for due and certain fulfilment.<sup>40</sup>

The adoption of the messianic epithet Manṣūr<sup>41</sup> by al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz was in conformity with the apocalyptic mood of the times. Evidence of the use of the messianic phrase al-Manṣūr by al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz can be also found on the inscriptions of Fāṭimid coins of his era. A new dirham introduced in 382/992 read on the obverse: al-wāḥid Allāh al-ghafūr ("Allāh alone is forgiving") and on the reverse: Al-Imām Abu'l-Manṣūr.<sup>42</sup>

The inscriptions on coinage and items signifying royalty such as signet rings display the same Fāṭimid concern to advocate their religious legitimacy. The message on the signet ring of al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz read as follows: "Bi naṣr al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz al-Jabbār, Yantaṣir al-Imām Nizār"<sup>43</sup> ("By the victory of the most Powerful, the most Mighty (that is Allāh), Imām Nizār will be victorious." On a dinar minted at al-Mahdīya in 366/976-7 as well as one minted in Miṣr in 384/994-5 are to be found the following religious legends: ʿAbd

Allāh wa walīhi Nizār al-Imām al-ʿAzīz billāh Amīr al-Muʿminīn  
 ("The slave and friend of Allāh, the Imām Nizār al-ʿAzīz billāh,  
 the commander of the believers") and La illāha ilā-Allāh, Muḥammad  
Raṣūl Allāh ʿAlā Khair Ṣafwat Allāh ("There is no God but Allah,  
 Muḥammad is His Messenger and [peace be] upon the chosen ones of  
 Allāh...")<sup>44</sup>

One interpretation of al-ʿAzīz's active and diligent performance of religious obligations is that it highlighted his exalted rank of being not just an extremely powerful temporal ruler but also, according to the Fāṭimid view, the only legitimate religious authority in Islam. The liturgical phrases on Fāṭimid regalia, the carving of religious texts on the mosques of the time and the pious inscriptions on their coinage serve further to reiterate the Fāṭimid claim to exclusive spirituality.

As the sole heir to spiritual authority and the fountainhead of knowledge - ẓāhir (exoteric) and bāṭin (esoteric) - the Fāṭimid Imām's foremost duty was to give impetus to Ismāʿīlism and to disseminate its precepts and doctrines.

## II Daʿwa:

One of the most noteworthy ways in which the Fāṭimid Imāms fulfilled this obligation was to continue their patronage of the organisation which their predecessors had created in order to



establish a sophisticated political and doctrinal structure by which Ismāʿīlīsm was able to gain widespread support and political success.<sup>45</sup> This organization was called the daʿwa - a term based on the Qu'rān (LXI, 7), signifying a call or invitation to Islam. As Nanji has pointed out, although this institution was not unique to the Ismāʿīlīs, its skilful organisation by its highly accomplished representatives, the dāʿīs, gave it a very special character within Ismāʿīlism. The importance that the Fāṭimid Imāms accorded the daʿwa organization can be ascertained from the fact that they elevated the latter to a pillar of state. According to Lewis:

The Fāṭimids organized them [the dāʿīs] into a third branch of government, with its own functions, structure and hierarchy, under the direction of the chief missionary and the ultimate authority of the Caliph in his capacity as Imām.<sup>47</sup>

The Fāṭimid daʿwa operated in two concentric circles. Firstly, within the territorial domain of the Fāṭimids, where Ismāʿīlīsm was the state religion; secondly, outside their dominions where the Fāṭimid Imāms commanded the religious loyalty of groups of Ismāʿīlīs who were sent out in advance to prepare the ground for the hoped-for ultimate Fāṭimid conquest. The main functions of the daʿwa were: (a) administrative at the centre and within the Fāṭimid empire, and (b) religio-political in other spheres of its activity outside the Fāṭimid boundaries. The aim of both of these functions was to consolidate and expand the Fāṭimid ideology and empire, although the first function worked in harmony with the established political authority while the second worked in opposition to it.<sup>48</sup>

## II i Patronage of the da<sup>ʿ</sup>wa by al-ʿAzīz

In keeping with the tradition of the Fāṭimid Imāms before him, al-ʿAzīz fostered various da<sup>ʿ</sup>wa activities during his reign. In 366/976, he appointed Qādī al-Nu<sup>ʿ</sup>mān's son, ʿAlī b. al-Nu<sup>ʿ</sup>man to the dual posts of Qādī al-Quḍāt (Chief Qādī) and dā<sup>ʿ</sup>ī al-du<sup>ʿ</sup>āt (Chief dā<sup>ʿ</sup>ī). He also made ʿAlī responsible for the preparation and propagation of the majālis al-ʿulūm wa'l-ḥikma (lectures on religious knowledge and wisdom).<sup>49</sup> The dā<sup>ʿ</sup>ī al-du<sup>ʿ</sup>āt was responsible for the management of the da<sup>ʿ</sup>wa within the boundaries of the Fāṭimid empire and beyond its frontiers. Broadly speaking, this amounted to control over the hierarchy of dā<sup>ʿ</sup>īs; the training of the dā<sup>ʿ</sup>īs; management of the da<sup>ʿ</sup>wā's finances; reading of the majālis al-ḥikma and taking the oath of allegiance on behalf of the Imām.<sup>50</sup>

The renowned Fāṭimid patronage of learning and other intellectual pursuits extended to the realm of acquiring religious knowledge as well. A classic example of al-ʿAzīz's promotion of the da<sup>ʿ</sup>wa occurred in 378/988. On the advice of his vizier Ya<sup>ʿ</sup>qūb b. Killis, al-ʿAzīz assigned fixed stipends to thirty-five fugahā' (jurists). These jurists were to hold study sessions and meetings in the Azhar mosque on Fridays between the midday and the ʿaṣr (late afternoon) prayers. In addition to their stipends, the fugahā' received a fixed sum from the vizier each year. They were also honoured by the Imām on the two canonical festivals of ʿĪd al-Fiṭr and ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā. Al-ʿAzīz also permitted the fugahā' to

build a house for themselves next to the jāmi'.<sup>51</sup> The pattern of allowing the jurists to teach at the jāmi' al-Azhar followed a trend established by Ibn Killis. The fukahā' who had originally lectured at the vizier's house were subsequently told to deliver their lectures at the mosque of 'Amr.<sup>52</sup>

The official sanction given to the fukahā' to teach in mosques by al-'Azīz is viewed by some historians as being a forerunner to the founding of the dār al-ḥikma by al-Ḥākim in 395/1004.<sup>33</sup> Thereafter, although the teaching and propaganda functions of the mosque did not completely cease, they were nonetheless foreshadowed by the activities of the dār al-ḥikma which flourished in the reign of al-Ḥākim.

## II ii The Azhar mosque - a centre for the dissemination of the da'wa:

The notion of the mosque being a centre of Ismā'īlī instruction as well as a place of prayer was reckoned by exponents of Ismā'īlism as a physical expression of the intersection of the zāhir (exotericism) and the bāṭin (esotericism). Qādī al-Nu'mān explains in his Ta'wīl al-Da'ā'im that the mosque is a house (bait) where people gather to pray, but its esoteric meaning (bāṭin) is that it is the place where Ismā'īlī believers gather for initiation to the da'wa.<sup>54</sup>

Soon after the Azhar mosque was founded, it functioned both as a

place of prayer as well as a centre of propaganda. In 365/975, for example, the chief qādī, ʿAlī b. al-Nuʿmān, dictated in the presence of an immense multitude at the Azhar, his father, Qādī al-Nuʿmān's compendium of law "according to the Family of the Prophet", called al-Iqriṣār.<sup>55</sup> In the light of the above information, Bloom's statement that, "the establishment of the resident fuqahā' [at the Azhar in 378/988] marks the inauguration of the mosque's formal role as a teaching institution"<sup>56</sup> needs to be revised; for long before that event the Azhar was an active participant in the propagatory activities of the daʿwa.

An extremely interesting feature of the Azhar is that it also functioned as a centre for the religious education of women. Al-Maqrīzī reports on the authority of al-Muṣabbiḥī that the chief dāʿī used to read out majālis (lectures) to the men sitting on the chair of the daʿwa in the Great Hall. Lectures for women were held in the chief dāʿī's audience chamber. These lectures were called majālis al-hikma (lectures on spiritual philosophy). Women of the court were lectured separately at the palace.<sup>57</sup>

Sanders comments that she finds the idea of women gathering together for Ismāʿīlī instruction sponsored by the state remarkable.<sup>58</sup> This is, however, totally in conformity with what one would expect. Bloom's research on the religious situation during the half century preceding the conquest of Egypt reveals that women had become increasingly involved in religious activities and that they were strongly represented among ʿAlīd converts and



sympathisers. Egyptian society's penchant for the veneration of saints, coupled with a well-established tradition of female ʿAlid saints in Egypt such as Saʿida Nafīsa (a descendant of Ḥasan b. ʿAlī Abī Tālib and a daughter-in-law of Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq), Umm Kulthūm (Kulthūm bint al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq) and Saʿida Zainab (daughter of Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir) encouraged the participation of women in religious life.<sup>59</sup>

The women of the Fāṭimid court were perceived by their subject counterparts as models of ideal behaviour. Women of al-ʿAzīz's court, namely his mother Durzān and his sister Saʿīdat al-Mulk, were both actively involved in the religious activities of their times. In Ramaḍān 366/976, for instance, Durzān had the jāmiʿ at Qarāfa - a locus of female piety - completely renovated.<sup>60</sup> When Saʿīdat al-Mulk's mother, that is, Durzān, died in Shawwāl 386/November 996, the former spent a month at the grave to perform all the religious ceremonies and to finish the obsequies.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, the Fāṭimids, with their well-known enlightened attitude to knowledge, provided the perfect milieu for the Egyptian women to involve themselves in the quest for religious knowledge.

## II iii The Royal Palace - a Repository of Knowledge

To the Ismāʿīlīs their Imām was, in Sander's words:

not only God's explicit designee, but an emanation of Divine Light itself. He stood at the center of belief (Imān). His palace, standing at the center of this walled city, was one visible expression of that idea.<sup>62</sup>

One interpretation of al-Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>izz bringing the remains of the three preceding Fāṭimid Imāms (al-Māhdi, al-Qā'im and al-Manṣūr) from North Africa and reburying them in the royal palace at Cairo is that the royal palace was a repository for the material remains of the line of Imāms; and therefore of the spiritual knowledge (ʿilm) that resided in the Imām of the time.<sup>63</sup>

As Sanders has pointed out, however, the palace was not just a repository of knowledge: it was the centre of the dissemination of that knowledge too. This is evident in a number of ways. The palace was used by the chief dāʿī as a place where he delivered majālis to the adepts. Al-Muṣabbiḥī reports an instance from al-ʿAzīz's reign of the palace being used for this purpose. He states that the Qādī al-Qudāt Muḥammād b. al-Nu<sup>ʿ</sup>mān sat in the palace to lecture on the sciences of the ahl al-bait (the family of the Prophet) according to the custom followed by him and his brother (ʿAlī b. al-Nu<sup>ʿ</sup>mān) in Egypt and their father in the Maghrib.<sup>64</sup>

Stern identifies these majālis as chapters of the Daʿā'im al-Islām.<sup>65</sup> The popularity of these lectures can be gauged from the fact that eleven people lost their lives due to overcrowding.<sup>66</sup> Al-Muṣabbiḥī provides details concerning the majālis held at the royal palace. According to him the dāʿī gave many lectures to different groups of people. He held separate majālis for the awliyā',<sup>67</sup> for the élite and the high-ranking officials of the state, for those who were in the service of the

palace, for the common people and for those who were visitors. The women of the court were lectured separately by the dāʿī. Al-Muṣabbiḥī calls these lectures majālis al-ḥikma (lectures on wisdom, that is, Ismāʿīlī theology).<sup>68</sup>

Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, who composed and conducted a number of the majālis al-ḥikma, states that the lectures were graded according to the level of knowledge of the audience. To the beginners was read the standard work of Ismāʿīlī law, the Daʿā'im al-Islām. Once instruction concerning the zāhir, that is, the literal meaning, of religion was completed, students were introduced to its bāṭin (inner meaning). Al-Nuʿmān composed the treatise Hudūd al-Maʿrifa ("Grades of Knowledge") for the intermediary course. He describes the work as follows:

We based this book on the grades of explaining, for those who deny this, the proofs for the need of allegorical interpretation and for the existence of an inner meaning for religion; and of how one must gradually ascend on its steps. We have set out, for the use of intelligent men, allusions and indications for the inner meaning and the allegorical interpretation.<sup>69</sup>

Advanced disciples were given a course on the roots of the bāṭin. Both the Asās al-Ta'wīl ("The Foundation of Allegorical Interpretation") and the Ta'wīl of Daʿā'im ("Allegorical Interpretation of the Daʿā'im") of al-Nuʿmān were utilised for the advanced course.

The practice of reading lectures to the faithful began while the Fāṭimids were still in North Africa. This is amply evident from the style of the compositions of Fāṭimid writers such as Qāḍī

al-Nuḥmān, as well as from the content of his works. Ezzedin states that according to a semi-secret, unpublished Druze source ʿUmdat al-ʿArifīn by a fifth/eleventh century Druze writer Ashrafānī, majālis were composed by the Fāṭimid Imāms al-Muʿizz, al-ʿAzīz and al-Ḥākim.<sup>70</sup> Ḥātim b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī (d. 596/1199) has an appendix to his manuscript, Tanbīh al-Ghāfilīn, a majlis which he ascribes to the Fāṭimid Imām al-ʿAzīz billāh.<sup>71</sup>

As is well known, attribution of religious treatises and compositions by members of a religious community to their spiritual head is a very common practice indeed. Moreover, due to the scanty information available on al-Ḥāmidī and his work, it is impossible to verify his attribution of the majlis to al-ʿAzīz. It must also be noted that as an author writing at least a couple of centuries after the reign of al-ʿAzīz, his sources of information - if indeed he mentions them - also need to be critically examined before the majlis can be positively identified to al-ʿAzīz.

Another facet of the palace's functioning as a repository of spiritual knowledge is that it housed the books of the famed Fāṭimid library, known as the khizānat al-kutub. Books had a special significance in Ismāʿīlī thought: they were reckoned to be a part of the rightful inheritance of the Imāms - symbols of his spiritual authority. According to Shīʿī belief, the rightful Imām inherited both the weapons of Prophethood (for example, the Prophet's sword) and its knowledge. The Imām was, therefore,



entrusted with books (al-kutub), knowledge (ʿilm) and the weapons (al-ṣilāh).<sup>72</sup>

Fāṭimid concern with books is illustrated clearly by an incident reported to have taken place in the reign of its first Caliph, al-Mahdī billāh (297/910-323/934). Al-Mahdī is reported to have been extremely remorseful at losing the books which contained the wisdom of the Imāms, his ancestors. These books were stolen, along with other items, from his caravan as he was travelling from Syria to Ifrīqiya in 296/909. A few years later, in 301-2/914-5, his son and heir presumptive recovered these books during his expedition to Egypt. So highly did al-Mahdī value these books that he is reported to have remarked that had an expedition been sent solely for the purpose of retrieving these books, it would still have been totally worthwhile.<sup>73</sup>

In accordance with the esteem with which the Fāṭimids held the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge, al-ʿAzīz had the khizānat al-kutub built in his palace. This acclaimed treasure trove of books was in the final instance destroyed by the Ayyūbid Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. Al-Muṣabbiḥī gives a lengthy description of the library which al-Maqrīzī has incorporated in his topographical work, Khīṭaṭ.<sup>74</sup>

Al-ʿAzīz's keen interest in his library can be gauged from a report by his contemporary, al-Muṣabbiḥī (366-420/977-1029). The latter writes that the Kitāb al-ʿAin of al-Khālīd b. Aḥmad was

once mentioned in the Fāṭimid Caliph's presence as a prime source of language. Al-ʿAzīz had some thirty odd copies of the work brought to him from his library, one of which was in the author's own handwriting. Similarly, once a man presented al-ʿAzīz with a copy of al-Ṭabarī's Ta'rīkh which he had purchased for one hundred dinars. The Caliph ordered his librarians to bring him all the copies of the Ta'rīkh from his library. Twenty copies of the work were brought to the Caliph including one in al-Ṭabarī's own writing. On another occasion Ibn al-Duraid's work Kitāb al-Jamhara received mention in front of al-ʿAzīz. At his request his librarians brought him a hundred copies of the work from the Khizānat al-Kutub.<sup>75</sup>

The promotion of the daʿwa, in a variety of forms, by the Imām, the chief dāʿī and his team of subordinate dāʿīs in the Fāṭimid capital Cairo, served as a model which the dāʿīs of the provinces of the Fāṭimid empire sought to emulate.

#### II iv Provincial dāʿīs

The dāʿīs of the provincial capitals of the Fāṭimid empire were appointed to office by the chief dāʿī in Cairo, and, as such, were under the latter's authority. Very little concrete information is available concerning the activities of the provincial dāʿīs during the reign of al-ʿAzīz. Even their identities remain generally unknown.

One notable exception to the above observation is an excerpt found in Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār's work, Tathbīt dalā'il al-Nubuwwah<sup>76</sup> This fiercely anti-Ismāʿīlī chief Qāḍī of Rayy (d. 415/1024) includes in his section on the reputation of the Ismāʿīlī madhhab a list of dāʿīs during the reign of al-ʿAzīz. Stern first drew attention to this list in his article on the Fāṭimid daʿwa.<sup>77</sup> He dates the Qāḍī's work to 385/995. The passage reads as follows:

I have told you about their former leaders. At the present time there are among them men like Abū Jabāla Ibrāhīm b. Ghassān, Jābir al-Manūffī, Abu'l-Fawāris al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Mimādhī, Abu'l-Ḥusain Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Kumait, Abū Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī, Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Ḥalabī, Abū Tamīm al-Ralbāī, Abu'l Qāsim al-Najjārī, Abu'l-Wafā al-Dailamī, Ibn Abi'l-Dīs, Khuzaima, Abu'l Khuzaima and Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. al-Nuʿmān. They are [based at] Cairo, al-Ramla, Tyre, Acre, Ascalon, Damascus, Baghdad and Jabal al-Summāq.<sup>78</sup>

Of the long list of dāʿīs quoted above, only a few can be identified by name from the sources. Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. al-Nuʿmān was the Chief Qāḍī of Egypt from 374/984 until his death in 389/999. He was the son of the renowned Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān. His base of operations would, of course, be Cairo.

The second dāʿī who can be positively identified is Abu'l-Fawāris al-Mimādhī. He was sent to Rayy as a dāʿī in al-ʿAzīz's reign, but was compelled to flee for safety from there, some time later.<sup>79</sup> While in exile the dāʿī composed an epistle addressed to the people of Rayy. This risāla has been preserved in what Ivanow calls "that precious chrestomathy of early Ismāʿīlī works", the Majmūʿ al-Tarbīya compiled by Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥārithī (d. 584/1188). From these it was apparently included

by Ḥasan b. Nūḥ b. Yusūf al-Bārūchī (d. 939/1533) in his work Kitāb al-Azhār.<sup>80</sup> At the time when ʿAbd al-Jabbār wrote his work, al-Mimādhī may well have been operating in one of the centres mentioned in the above report. No concrete information is, however, available on that point.

The last dāʿī who can be identified is Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Ḥalabī. Stern considers him to be Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ḥalabī al-Qāḍī; the dāʿī who transmitted al-Risāla al-Masīhiya from al-Muʿizz to Abu'l-Fawāris al-Mimādhī.<sup>81</sup> The dāʿī's base remains unknown.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār's report highlights important information concerning Syria. Notwithstanding the much discussed<sup>82</sup> politico-military setbacks that the Fāṭimids faced in their attempts to control Syria, the Ismāʿīlī daʿwa nonetheless flourished in its centres. The extent of Fāṭimid daʿwa activities in Syria can be gauged from the fact that within a quarter of a century of the Fāṭimid conquest of Syria, centres such as Damascus, Tyre, al-Ramla and ʿAsqalān had their own dāʿīs.

Stern has made a valid inference as regards Jabal al-Summāq - the mountainous region located south-west of Aleppo and north of Maʿarrat al-Nuʿmān. He points out that Jabal al-Summāq is the only district mentioned by ʿAbd al-Jabbār. All the rest are cities. He concludes that the existence of a "rural" dāʿī in the area suggests that Ismāʿīlīsm had spread in the villages there. He then highlights the fact that Jabal al-Summāq was an important



Ismāʿilī centre in the fifth/eleventh century.<sup>83</sup>

## II v Ismāʿilī Daʿwa in non-Fāṭimid territories:

Ismāʿilīsm was the official religion of the Fāṭimid state. Ismāʿilī communities beyond the Fāṭimid borders kept in touch with the headquarters at Cairo from where they received instruction and guidance. It was one of the principal obligations of the daʿwa to provide direction to the Ismāʿilī fraternity abroad.

A distinction needs to be drawn at the very outset of the discussion on the daʿwa in non-Fāṭimid lands during the reign of al-ʿAzīz, between those places that formally acknowledged Fāṭimid rule and those where the dāʿīs had converted segments of the population to Ismāʿilīsm. The pronouncement of the khutba at Mecca and Medina in al-ʿAzīz's name from 366/976 onwards belongs to the former category. So does the report that in Muḥarram 382/March-April 992 the khutba was pronounced in the Fāṭimid Caliph's name at Mosul by its ruler Abū Duwwād Muḥammad b. al-Musayyib al-ʿUqaylī.<sup>84</sup>

These formal allegiances to the reigning Fāṭimid Caliph by rulers of petty dynasties belong to the political arena. They have therefore been discussed in Chapter One under the section titled "Political overview of al-ʿAzīz's reign". Of course, they may also reflect the religious sentiments of these rulers or at least perhaps of some elements in their states. Fāṭimid daʿwa

organisation was indeed too widespread and active by this time not to have achieved at least that measure of success. Unfortunately, the primary sources of the time do not provide concrete information on the daʿwa activities in these regions. No more will therefore be said about them in this context. Meanwhile, enough is known about the activities of the daʿwa in Yemen, Sind, Kirmān and Khwārazm to form a coherent picture.

## II v 1 Yemen

The Fāṭimid state was the outcome of the Ismāʿīlī daʿwa. The roots of the Ismāʿīlī daʿwa had been well entrenched in Yemeni soil.<sup>85</sup> Ismāʿīlī sources contemporary to the events clearly reveal that Yemen had been earmarked by the future Fāṭimid ruler al-Mahdī as the country from which his zuhūr (emergence) was to take place. A turn of events in Yemen, particularly a rupture of relations between the two main dāʿīs there, made the Imām choose Ifrīqiya instead as the first base of Fāṭimid authority.<sup>86</sup>

Once the Fāṭimid Caliphate was established in the Maghrib, Yemenī dāʿīs continued to maintain close links with the daʿwa headquarters at al-Qairawān. Challenged by protagonists of rival ideologies and weakened by internal dissension, the daʿwa in Yemen suffered serious setbacks in the next few decades. Consequently the political power which pioneering dāʿīs like Ibn Ḥawshab and ʿAlī b. al-Faḍl had fought so hard to achieve, slipped away from Ismāʿīlī hands. The daʿwa nonetheless continued to be conducted by

the daʿīs there.<sup>87</sup>

By the time the fifth Fāṭimid Caliph, al-ʿAzīz, acceded to power, the daʿwa in Yemen had been in operation for almost a century. Very few details are, however, available on the daʿwa activities at this time. The well-known eighth/fifteenth century Yemenī dāʿī, ʿImād al-Dīn Idrīs, mentions in his ʿUyūn al-Akḥbār, that dāʿī Jaʿfar b. Aḥmad b. ʿAbbās was succeeded by dāʿī ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Bishr from the Wādī Quṭāba, who proclaimed the daʿwa in the name of al-ʿAzīz billāh. He was followed by dāʿī Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. al-ʿAbbās al-Shāwarī. Then came dāʿī Ḥarūn b. Muḥammad b. Raḥīm, who initially preached for al-ʿAzīz and then in the name of his successor, al-Hākim bi-amrillāh. Appointments to the post of the headship of the daʿwa in Yemen were made by the Fāṭimid Caliphs.<sup>88</sup>

Ismāʿīlī daʿwa in Yemen benefited from an unusual quarter during the reign of al-ʿAzīz. In 379/989-90 ʿAbd Allāh b. Qaṭṭān b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Yuʿfir invaded the Tihāma, routed the rival Ziyādid army at Ḥarāz on the Wādī Sahām and then sacked Zabīd - the Ziyādid headquarters. On his return from this victorious campaign ʿAbd Allāh declared the khuṭba in the name of the Fāṭimid al-ʿAzīz in all his territories including Ṣanʿāʾ, Zabīd and the Tihāma.<sup>89</sup>

The fact that a member of the Yuʿfirid dynasty, who were both ideologically and politically opposed to Ismāʿīlism, proclaimed the khuṭba in the name of their adversary's Imām, appears quite

astonishing at first sight. In fact, ʿAbd Allāh b. Yuʿfir was related from his maternal side to the well-known Yemenī dāʿī ʿAlī b. al-Faḍl.<sup>90</sup> He appears to have secretly converted to Ismāʿīlism. After his political success ʿAbd Allāh took the opportunity to declare his beliefs openly. His subsequent actions bear testimony to the above premise. In 380/990 ʿAbd Allāh led his loyal troops into the Mikhlāf Jaʿfar where his grandfather, ʿAlī b. al-Faḍl had ruled for a long time. He hoped to resurrect the Fāṭimid state there. He was, however, opposed by the inhabitants of the area. He then chose to establish his headquarters at Ibb, where he remained till his death in 387/997-8.<sup>91</sup>

It can be concluded from the above information that the daʿwa in Yemen was certainly functioning, if not perhaps flourishing in the reign of al-ʿAzīz. The apogee of Ismāʿīlī daʿwa in Yemen was, however, yet to follow, in the time of the Ṣulayḥid dynasty (439-532/1047-1138).

## II v 2 Sind

The earliest authentic account of Ismāʿīlī daʿwa activities in Sind is to be found in Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān's work on the beginnings of the daʿwa and the inception of the [Fāṭimid] state, "Iftitāḥ al-daʿwa wa ibtidā' al-dawla". According to the Qāḍī, the chief dāʿī of Yemen, Abu'l-Qāsim b. Ḥawshab - well-known by his title Manṣūr al-Yaman - sent his nephew al-Haitham as a dāʿī to Sind in



270/883.<sup>92</sup> Thus twenty-six years prior to the pronouncement of the khutba from the pulpits of Ifrīqiya, in the name of the first Fāṭimid sovereign, al-Mahdī billāh, the daʿwa in Sind had already taken root. Precise information on the subsequent development of daʿwa activities in the region are not available. The Qāḍī continues his above-mentioned report, however, by stating that al-Haitham converted many of the local inhabitants to Ismāʿīlism.

Daʿwa activities in the area seem to have flourished, for by the time of the fourth Fāṭimid Caliph, al-Muʿizz li-dīn Allāh the daʿwa had infiltrated to adjacent localities like Gujarāt and parts of the Punjāb.<sup>93</sup> According to al-Nuʿmān, the daʿwa had a substantial following in these areas. The Qāḍī's contemporary, the geographer Ibn Ḥawqal, adds that the authority of the Fāṭimid ruler was recognised in Balūchistān as well.<sup>94</sup>

Politically the daʿwa in Sind achieved success during the reign of al-Muʿizz. The local dāʿī - whose name is not mentioned in the sources - succeeded in converting to Ismāʿīlism one of the rulers of Sind. Thereafter, the sovereignty of al-Muʿizz was publicly proclaimed and the khutba read in his name. The dāʿī further consolidated the recently acquired political power of the daʿwa. The joint forces of the converted ruler and the dāʿī were able to defeat a coalition of local rulers who had opposed them. The city of Mūltān was then made the Ismāʿīlī capital and its dār al-hijra (place of migration).<sup>95</sup>

The religious views of the politically effective dāʿī of Sind were, however, regarded by the exponents of the daʿwa as being heretical, for he permitted the converts to Ismāʿīlism to continue certain un-Islamic practices. As the dāʿī died soon after as a result of a riding accident, the daʿwa authorities did not need to take any action concerning the removal of the dāʿī from authority. A new dāʿī, Ḥalam b. Shaibān, was then appointed in 354/965 over the principality of Sind.<sup>96</sup>

Ḥalam adopted a much stricter line towards undesirable practices. As Stern points out, "not only was he intent on enforcing a strict Islamic orthodoxy in the conduct of the daʿwa, but also went out of his way to destroy the famous idol of Multan." He also razed to the ground the temple which housed this idol and had a mosque built in its stead.<sup>97</sup>

During the reign of al-ʿAzīz, daʿwa activities continued unabated under the active leadership of dāʿī Ḥalam b. Shaibān. The latter also maintained regular contact with the daʿwa headquarters in Egypt. Al-Muqaddasī who visited Mūltān in 375/985, pointed out that its ruler was just and powerful, its inhabitants were Shīʿa and the khutba was read there in the name of the Fāṭimid Caliph. He added that the affairs of the principality were conducted according to the instructions from Egypt - where envoys and gifts were sent regularly.<sup>98</sup> The above information is corroborated by another tenth-century writer, Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār. He reports that:

At the court of the fifth (Fāṭimid Imām, i.e. al-ʿAzīz) there are many visitors from Khwarazm and Mūltān and other countries carrying money and presents.<sup>99</sup>

Dāʿī Ḥalam ruled up to 376/986 when he died. He was succeeded by Shaikh Ḥamīd - probably his son, who ruled until 387/997.<sup>100</sup> Ironically, the prosperity of Mūltān led to its conquest by Maḥmūd of Ghazna in 399/1005-6 and the consequent loss of political authority by the daʿwa in the region.

As for the factors that attracted the Fāṭimids to selecting Sind as a base for spreading their influence, its location on the extremely popular sea route, was of vital consideration. Because of its location Sind could, moreover, maintain close contact with the daʿwa headquarters in Yemen. As Nanji has pointed out, politically Sind offered an opportunity to establish a principality that would serve as a secure foothold in the eastern Muslim world. Ideologically, it would act as a stepping-stone to spreading Ismāʿīlī influence eastwards.<sup>101</sup>

Another major factor was trade. Both Lewis and Hamdani's comprehensive research on medieval trade clearly indicates that the Fāṭimids were attempting to wrest the trade with India out of the hands of Baghdad.<sup>102</sup> Goitein's study of the Geniza documents reveals a predominance of merchants from North Africa involved in the trade with India.<sup>103</sup> Nanji succinctly sums up the argument:

Admittedly, the little that we know of the history of economic activity in Islam and its influence on the political conditions of the time does not permit any substantial conclusions. We can be certain, however, that with the India trade becoming the backbone of the international economy of

the Islamic world, economic and social factors were important in Fāṭimid expansionism in Sind.<sup>104</sup>

That trade was an important vehicle for the dissemination of the Ismāʿīlī daʿwa is evident from the fact that communities under Fāṭimid influence were spread on the trade route along the southern shores of Persia, Makrān where the khutba was read for al-ʿAzīz circa 378/988, and in Baluchistān.<sup>105</sup>

### II v 3 Kirmān and Khwārazm

Trade also appears to have been a major factor in the introduction of the Ismāʿīlī daʿwa in commercially thriving areas of Kirmān and Khwārazm.<sup>106</sup> Writing in 367/978, the fourth/tenth century geographer Ibn Ḥawqal found the people of Kirmān professing the Maghribī (that is, the Fāṭimid) daʿwa.<sup>107</sup> Unfortunately, he does not provide any further information on the issue. Madelung notes that towards the end of the fourth/tenth century there was a resident Fāṭimid dāʿī at the town of Jīruft in Kirmān.<sup>108</sup> One conclusion that can be drawn from the above statement is that daʿwa activities must have progressed enough to justify the need for a resident dāʿī in the region by that time.

Similar is the case of Khwārazm. Qādī ʿAbd al-Jabbār mentions, in a report quoted above in connection with Mūltān, that gifts and money arrived regularly at the fifth Fāṭimid Caliph's court from Khwārazm.<sup>109</sup> This information cannot be corroborated from other contemporary sources. Yet there is no need to doubt the



information provided by the Qādī. His work, Tathbīt dalā'il al-Nubuwwa, bears ample testimony to the fact that the Qādī was extremely hostile to Ismā'īlism. He would, therefore, have no purpose in providing the above information for the sake of propaganda.

The above survey of da'wa activities outside the Fāṭimid domains during the reign of al-ʿAzīz, reveals that the dā'īs in the various regions of the Islamic world were actively propagating the Ismā'īlī cause. These dā'īs were generally trained at the da'wa headquarters in Cairo. Once in charge of their own areas, these dā'īs maintained regular contact with Cairo. Yet they also exercised a fair degree of independence in matters pertaining to both the da'wa and dawla (politics). If a particular dā'ī overstepped his authority or introduced innovations in religious matters, however, steps were immediately taken by the central da'wa authorities to replace him. The da'wa also had political ambitions. As Stern remarks:

The far-flung mission, a unique feature of Ismā'īlism, was the clearest expression of the ambitions of the Fāṭimids to be much more than the rulers of the territories which formed their empire.<sup>110</sup>

### III The Promotion of Fāṭimid Rites and Law

The mechanism of introducing Ismā'īlism at the official level in Egypt was set in motion soon after Jauhar marched into Fustāṭ on 12 Sha'bān 358/1 July 970. The process of doing so was

deliberately gradual so as not to antagonise the non-Ismāʿīlī majority of Egypt. Al-Maqrīzī notes that while the reigning Fāṭimid Caliph's name was incorporated in the khutba immediately after the conquest, the actual Fāṭimid formula of the khutba was introduced several months later, in Dhū'l-Ḥijja 358/October-November 970;<sup>111</sup> and the Fāṭimid formula of the call to prayer (ādhān) later still, in Jumādā I 359/March-April 971.<sup>112</sup> Once al-Muʿizz had arrived in Egypt, he initiated some more Fāṭimid rites and forbade the practice of Sunnī ones. The Fāṭimid Imām prohibited the recital of "sabbih bismī-Rabbik" (Sura LXXXVII) during the Friday prayer. He also abolished the takbīr (pronouncement of Allāh-u-Akbar - "Allah is Great") after the Friday prayer.<sup>113</sup> Both these acts formed part of the Sunnī ritual.

The next Fāṭimid Imām, al-ʿAzīz, was equally fervent in the administration of official Ismāʿīlism in Egypt. In 370/980-1 an official decree was pronounced forbidding the performance of Sunnī practices and prayers in Ramaḍān.<sup>114</sup> According to al-Maqrīzī, the recital of the tarāwīḥ (prayer(s) during Ramaḍān) was prohibited in all mosques throughout Egypt in 372/982-3.<sup>115</sup> In Syria the tarāwīḥ had apparently been stopped much earlier, for under the year 363/973-4 al-Dhahabī reports that at the beginning of Ramaḍān al-Muʿizz issued orders abolishing the tarāwīḥ prayer there.<sup>116</sup>

Another significant step that al-ʿAzīz took in the "Ismailisation" of Egypt was to prevent ʿAbd al-Samīʿ and his sons from reciting

the khutba in 379/989. This powerful and well-established family of mu'adhdhins (preachers) were unwilling to pronounce the khutba according to the Fāṭimid practice. Consequently they were replaced by Jaʿfar b. al-Ḥasan and his brother (whom al-Maqrīzī does not name). These brothers were to read the khutba at the jāmiʿ al-ʿAṭīq and the jāmiʿ al-Azhar respectively.<sup>117</sup>

The gradual but steady enforcement of Fāṭimid law was yet another means of introducing official Ismāʿīlism in Egypt. At the time of the Fāṭimid conquest the Qāḍī at Fustāṭ was a Mālikī, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh Abū Ṭāhir al-Duhlī. He was well established in his post, having served in that capacity since 348/959-60.<sup>118</sup> Abū Ṭāhir was allowed to continue in his post by Jawhar on condition that he pass judgements according to Ismāʿīlī law. The Qāḍī agreed in principle but did not always abide by it in practice.

Fāṭimid policy concerning legal matters appears to have hinged on gradually phasing out Sunnī authority without, however, disrupting the state machinery. In keeping with this policy, Abū Ṭāhir was not dismissed, although his authority was curtailed considerably. A Maghribī Qāḍī called ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Thawbān, who had accompanied al-Muʿizz to Egypt, was initially appointed to hear the grievances of the Maghribīs. Later he extended his authority to judge the population of Fustāṭ as well.<sup>119</sup> Upon his death, al-Muʿizz officially appointed ʿAlī b. al-Nuʿmān as a qāḍī. ʿAlī heard cases in the jāmiʿ al-ʿAṭīq in Fustāṭ where Abū Ṭāhir also judged.<sup>120</sup> There are other accounts as to where ʿAlī judged

cases. According to Ibn al-Dawādārī, Ibn al-Nuʿmān acted as a judge in Cairo for the Maghribīs. Al-Maqrīzī, on the other hand, mentions that both the qāḍīs heard cases in their own homes, a practice which, as Lev has remarked, seems rather unusual.<sup>121</sup>

Al-Muʿizz's successor, al-ʿAzīz, applied himself zealously to the enforcement of Fāṭimid law in his domains. Accordingly, he took certain measures to curb the Māliki qāḍī's powers. He sought to do so by increasing ʿAlī b. Nuʿmān's authority. In the official letter of appointment confirming ʿAlī b. al-Nuʿmān in his post, was, therefore, included a clause which stipulated that it was sufficient for one of the parties involved in a suit to request the case to be brought before ʿAlī for it to be heard by ʿAlī and not by anyone else.<sup>122</sup>

In Ṣafar 366/September 976, less than a year after al-ʿAzīz's accession to power, Abū Ṭāhir tendered his resignation as the qāḍī of Miṣr. He had reached an advanced age and by this time suffered poor health and was semi-paralysed. Abū Ṭāhir made a final bid to keep the qāḍīship in his family, however. When handing in his resignation to al-ʿAzīz, the Qāḍī requested that his son be appointed in his place.<sup>123</sup> As Lev has remarked, it was an attempt that had little chance of success since al-ʿAzīz intended to introduce official Ismāʿīlism more widely.<sup>124</sup> Yet adhering to the Fāṭimid policy of gradually phasing out Sunnī authority, al-ʿAzīz had waited patiently for Abū Ṭāhir to retire. The Fāṭimid Caliph then brought about some significant changes in the judicial



system.

Al-ʿAzīz centralized the judiciary. He vested all judicial authority in the hands of ʿAlī b. al-Nuʿmān. He even made ʿAlī in charge of other aspects of Fāṭimid religious and secular administration. In a letter of appointment issued by the Fāṭimid ruler, three days after the resignation of Abū Ṭāhir, ʿAlī b. al-Nuʿmān was appointed the qāḍī al-quḍāt (chief qāḍī) of all Fāṭimid lands. He was also made the dāʿī al-duʿāt (chief dāʿī) whose responsibility it was to perform religious rituals such as prayers and preaching. In the secular sphere of government, ʿAlī was appointed as a supervisor of the mint and of weights and measures.<sup>125</sup>

Important modifications were also introduced in the administration of justice. From 366/976-7 onwards a separate judge was not appointed over Fustāṭ.<sup>126</sup> Moreover, Fāṭimid jurisdiction was extended to the provinces of the Caliphate as well. This took place when ʿAlī b. al-Nuʿmān appointed his brother Muḥammad as the qāḍī of Tinnīs, Damiyāt and Farāma. Muḥammad, in turn, appointed his deputies in these areas.

The "Ismailisation" of the judicial system did not impose a ban on the recruitment of non-Ismāʿīlī jurists to legal posts. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī reports, for instance, that a Shāfiʿī faqīh was appointed as qāḍī by ʿAlī b. al-Nuʿmān.<sup>128</sup> It certainly meant, however, that non-Ismāʿīlī judges too had to pronounce their judgements according to Ismāʿīlī law.

The centralisation of the judiciary continued even after the death of ʿAlī b. al-Nuʿmān in 374/984-5. After ʿAlī, his brother Muḥammad b. al-Nuʿmān was promoted to the post of qāḍī al-quḍāt. This latter was entrusted with the same responsibilities and power as his predecessor. In addition, Muḥammad continued to appoint deputies at Tinnīs, Damyāt and Farāma.<sup>129</sup> Muḥammad appears to have subsequently appointed his brother Yaḥyā over these territories, for under the year 384/994 al-Maqrīzī mentions that Yaḥyā sent money, presents and gifts for the Kaḥnā from Tinnīs, Damyāt and Farāma.<sup>130</sup>

That the enforcement of Ismāʿīlī law was paramount to the Fāṭimid authorities of the time is evident from the following incident. The chief qāḍī, Muḥammad b. al-Nuʿmān, had appointed jurists to give fatwās (legal opinions) according to the Ismāʿīlī code of law. The jurists of one of the jāmiʿ of Fustāṭ refused to comply with this condition of the qāḍī. Muḥammad immediately took firm action against the dissenters.<sup>131</sup>

#### IV Conversion to Ismāʿīlīsm

Fāṭimid concern with the introduction of Ismāʿīlism at the official level was not, however, part of the alleged Fāṭimid scheme of converting the population of Egypt en masse to Ismāʿīlism. Modern historians of the Fāṭimids often draw conclusions such as:

They [the Fāṭimids] failed in converting the population of Egypt to Ismāʿīlism. Egypt in the tenth-twelfth centuries was an Ismāʿīlī state, but it was not an Ismāʿīlī society.

This assertion can certainly not be substantiated for the reigns of either al-Muʿizz or of al-ʿAzīz. The gradual but thorough permeation of Fāṭimid rites and law in the time of the first two Fāṭimid Imāms of Egypt clearly reveals that once these two rulers decided on a certain course of action, they made every endeavour to translate that notion into reality. Had they decided on a policy of mass conversion then surely there would be some manifestations of this policy?

The most powerful tool that the Fāṭimids possessed for religious propaganda was the daʿwa. As is evident from the discussion on the daʿwa earlier on in the chapter, this Fāṭimid organisation flourished during the times of al-Muʿizz and al-ʿAzīz. The activities of its dāʿīs are fairly well documented as well. Yet in the sources contemporary to the Fāṭimids one finds not even a hint to the effect that the dāʿīs were engaged in conversation at the grass root level. Instances of the chief dāʿī reading out majālis or even lectures on the ahl al-bait in the jāmiʿ al-Azhar, located in the Fāṭimid court capital, cannot clearly be classified as an example of conversion at the popular level. Nor, too, can the precedent of establishing resident fugahāʾ at the Azhar by al-ʿAzīz.

This is not to say that the conversion of the masses was not one of the means employed by the daʿwa to achieve its religious and

political ambitions. This method was certainly employed by the dāʿīs of the Yemen and of the Maghrib in pre-Fāṭimid days to procure support for the Ismāʿīlī cause. Conversion of various segments of the population was also the aim of the dāʿīs operating in territories outside the Fāṭimid fold.<sup>133</sup> It does not appear to have been the object of the daʿwa within the Fāṭimid domain, however.

Consequently, the statement that the Fāṭimids failed to convert the population of Egypt to Ismāʿīlism is certainly invalid and unjust as far as the first two Fāṭimid Imāms of Egypt are concerned. These two rulers did not aim to make Egypt an "Ismāʿīlī society". They did, on the other hand, strive to transform Egypt to an "Ismāʿīlī state" Accordingly, they took every step to ensure that the Ismāʿīlī code of conduct was adopted at the official level. Overt opposition to their official policies was consequently not merely frowned upon by the Fāṭimid authorities but liable to provoke immediate reprisals from them.



# FOOTNOTES

1. B. Lewis, "An Interpretation of Fāṭimid History", Colloque, 290. On the Ismāʿīlī view of daʿwa see M. Canard, "Daʿwa", E.1<sup>2</sup>, II, 168-70 and his references.
2. This is possible for al-ʿAzīz's predecessor, al-Muʿizz, for a number of writings of the two major Fāṭimid writers of his reign - al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān and Jaʿfar b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman - are extant. Similarly, Fāṭimid doctrines as expounded by the dāʿīs can be ascertained in al-ʿAzīz's successor al-Ḥākim's time via the profound extant work of Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī. On these and other Fāṭimid writers see Poonawala, op.cit., ch. 1, "Pre-Fāṭimids and Fāṭimids."
3. Cf. W. Madelung, "Ismāʿīliyya", III, E.1<sup>2</sup>, 203-4; Idem, "Das Imamāt in der frühen ismailitischen Lehre" in Der Islam XXXVII (1961), 43-135; W. Ivanow, "The Organization of Fāṭimid Propaganda" in JBBRAS, XV (1939), 1-35; A. Hamdani, "Evolution of the Organisational Structure of the Fūṭimī Daʿwah", AS, III (1976), 85-114.
4. The full title of the Daʿāʾim is Daʿʾāʾim al-Islām wa Dhikr al-Ḥalāl waʾl-Ḥarām waʾl-Qadāyā waʾl-Aḥkām. On the esteem in which the Dāʿāʾim was held in Fāṭimid times see Poonawala, op. cit., 57 and the sources he cites.
5. The other six pillars are al-ṭahāra (ritual purity), al-ṣalāt (prayer), al-zakāt (alms giving), al-ṣawm (fasting), al-ḥajj (pilgrimage), al-jihād (holy war). For a summary of the chapter on al-wilāya in English see W. Ivanow, A Creed of the Fāṭimids (Bombay, 1936), 6-10.
6. Cf. Bulbul Shah, "The Imam as Interpreter of the Qurʾān according to al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān", unpublished MA thesis, McGill University (May, 1984), 15.
7. "The Nature of the Fāṭimid Achievement", Colloque, 207.
8. See, for example, Ittiʿāz, I, 267, 272, 276, 279, 283.
9. Ittiʿāz, I, 295; al-Duwal, 38.
10. Ittiʿāz, I, 294; Ibn Muyassar, Taʾrīkh, 52.
11. Sanders, op. cit., 100-1.
12. Al-Maqrīzī, Khīṭaṭ, II, 280. The event is reported in less detail by the author in his Ittiʿāz, I, 267.
13. Ittiʿāz, 272-3, 276, 279-80, 283-4, 289.

14. On the Fāṭimid muṣallā see Bloom, "Meaning" 93.
15. Ibn Zāfir, al-Duwal, 38. Ibn Taghrī Birdī gives in his al-Nujūm, 11-12, a lengthy account of how the fiṭra (alms-giving) was organised, how much was donated as well as mentioning the items collected and their quantities.
16. Ibn Zāfir, al-Duwal, 38.
17. Ittiḥāz, 288-9 and 272. Ibn Muyassar, Ta'rīkh, 49-50.
18. Khiṭāṭ, I, 451; Ittiḥāz, 267.
19. Sanders, op. cit., 108.
20. Daḥā'im al-Islām, I, p. 100 and Ta'wīl al-Dāḥā'im, I, 316-22 as cited by Sanders, op. cit., p. 109.
21. See Gerard Salinger, "The Kitāb al-Jihād from Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's Daḥā'im al-Islām," translated with Introduction and Notes. Unpublished PhD thesis. Columbia University, (1953). See also A. A. A. Fyzee, The Book of Faith from the Daḥā'im al-Islām of Qāḍī al-Nu'mān (Bombay, 1974, 2).
22. Ittiḥāz, I, 288.
23. The importance that the Fāṭimids attached to the acknowledgement of their political sovereignty by the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina and the manner in which they gained that recognition has been discussed by Lev, "A political study", 117-8 and by Bloom, "Meaning", 194-7.
24. Ittiḥāz, 222-5; Ibn Muyassar, Ta'rīkh, 47.
25. Jonathan Bloom, "The Origins of Fāṭimid Art", Muqarnas, III (1985), 33.
26. Ittiḥāz, I, 268.
27. Ittiḥāz, I, 247, 252, 267, 272, 276, 279, 283 and 289. Bloom, "Meaning", p. 195, states that gifts were sent to the Ka'ba for three reasons: to emphasise the holiness of the place and the piety of the donors, to acquire holiness and sacredness from the sanctuary's holiness, and finally to symbolise the submission of a ruler to Islam. See also O. Grabar, "The Umayyad dome of the Rock in Jerusalem", Ars Orientalis 3 (1959), 33-62, p. 30 ff., where the meaning of gifts to the Ka'ba has been explored in a different context.
28. Ittiḥāz, I, 252; Ibn Muyassar, Ta'rīkh, 49.
29. See the introduction to al-Maqrīzī's Al-Dhahab al-Masbūk bi dhikr man ḥajja min al-khulafā' wa'l-mulūk by J. Shayyal

- (Cairo, 1955), 10-16, where the editor discusses which of the rulers of the various Islamic dynasties performed the hajj.
30. That is why, for example, al-ʿAzīz was advised by the notables of Egypt not to leave Cairo himself, but send his armed forces under one of the Fāṭimid commanders against Alptegin in Syria. See Ittiʿāz, I, p. 242.
  31. Cf. Ittiʿāz, I, 295; al-Duwal, 37; Khiṭaṭ, I, 451.
  32. Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt, De Slane's trans., III, 256; Ittiʿāz, I, 267, Khiṭaṭ, II, 277. Both Ibn Khallikān and Al-Maqrīzī derive the date of the construction from al-Muṣabbiḥi's history. According to the Sīra of Ibn Killis, which is partially preserved in Khiṭaṭ [II, 277-8], the foundation of the mosque was laid a year earlier, that is on 10 Ramaḍān, 379; see also Bloom, "Meaning", 107.
  33. Cf. Caroline Williams, "Fāṭimī Mausolea". of Cairo", 56. The extensive research of Bloom [ch. V, "Meaning"] on the decoration and meaning of the jāmiʿ al-Azhar built in al-ʿAzīz's predecessor's reign, provides very interesting material on the symbolic significance of the Qu'ranic inscriptions of the mosque.
  34. Ibid, 107 and 125. On the later page Bloom states that it was al-ʿAzīz's mother, Durzān, who had the jāmiʿ al-Qarāfa completely restored through the services of her muhtasib al-Ḥasan b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Fārisī. Previously the mosque had been the masjid of the Banū ʿAbd Allāh b. Māniʿ and had been known as the masjid al-Qubba ("The Mosque of the Dome"). It is reported to have been a gathering place for the reciters of the Qurʾān (al-Qurrāʾ).
  35. Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt, III, 256; Ittiʿāz, I, 294. Al-ʿAzīz is also reported to have renovated a muṣallā that had initially been constructed by Jauhar in 358/969. See Khiṭaṭ, I, 451.
  36. Khiṭaṭ, II, 227.
  37. Ittiʿāz, I, 267.
  38. On the ʿAbbāsīd adoption of Messianic titles see B. Lewis, "The Regnal Titles of the First Abbasid Caliphs", Studies in Classical and Ottoman Islam, Variorum Reprints (London, 1976), II, 13-26.
  39. Ibid., 13.
  40. Ibid., 14.



41. On a thorough investigation of the messianic connotations of the title al-Manṣūr see Lewis, "Regnal Titles", 16-19.
42. Ibn Muyassar, Ta'rīkh, 49; Ittiḥāz, I, 274-5.
43. Ittiḥāz, I, 292; Ibn Muyassar, Ta'rīkh, 51.
44. J. Farrugia De Candia, "Monnaies Fatimites du Musée du Bardo", Revue Tunisienne (1936) VII, 368 and 371. It appears as if in the last phrase of the coin, a word such as peace, blessings, etc. is missing.
45. Azim Nanji, "Ismā'īlism", Islamic Spirituality, I: Foundations. Ed. S. H. Nasr, (London, 1987), 179.
46. Ibid., 179-80. On the various aspects of the Ismā'īlī da'wa see M. Canard "Da'wa", E.1<sup>2</sup>, II, pp. 168-70; S. M. Stern, "Cairo as the Centre of the Ismā'īlī Movement", Colloque, 437-50; W. Ivanow, "The Organisation of Fāṭimid Propaganda", JBBRAS (1939), XV, 1-35; A. Hamdani, "Evolution of the Organisational Structure of the Fāṭimī Da'wah", AS, III (1976), 85-114. In footnote 1, 103, Hamdani cites the standard works on the Ismā'īlī Da'wa up to the publication of his article.
47. "An Interpretation of Fāṭimid History", Colloque, 290.
48. Stern, "Cairo", 437-8; A. Hamdani, The Fatimids, (Karachi, 1962), 22.
49. Idrīs, Uyūn, VI, 216.
50. Beshir Ibrahim Beshir, "The Fāṭimid Caliphate 386/996-487/1094". Unpublished PhD thesis (SOAS, 1970), 140.
51. Al-Maqrīzī, Khitāṭ, II, 273; al-Qalqashandī, Subḥ, III, 367; J. Jomier, "Al-Azhar", E.1<sup>2</sup>, I, 816.
52. Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt, De Slane's trans. IV, 363. The author reports this information from al-Musabbihī, Khitāṭ, II, 341.
53. On the dār al-ḥikma see D. Sourdél, "Dar al-ḥikma", E.1<sup>2</sup>, II, 126-7, and the sources cited by him.
54. Ta'wīl al-Da'ā'im, I, 225-6, in the discussion on masājid. Cf. Sanders op. cit., 68.
55. Khitāṭ, I, 391; II, 341; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, Rafʿ al-Iṣr ʿan Qūdāt Miṣr (Cairo, 1954-61), 360. Al-Nuʿmān's work al-Iqtiṣār was edited by M. W. Mirza (Damascus, 1954).
56. Bloom, "Meaning", 205.



57. Khiṭāṭ, I, 391.
58. Sanders, op. cit., 67-8.
59. Bloom, "Meaning", 149 and 153; for the shrines of these and other ʿAlīd saints in Egypt cf. Caroline Williams, "The Cult of ʿAlīd Saints in the Fāṭimid Monuments of Cairo", Muqarnas III, (1985), 39-60.
60. Khiṭāṭ, II, 318. On the Qarāfa as a locus of female piety see Bloom, "Meaning", ch. IV.
61. Ittiʿāz, I, 288-9.
62. Sanders, op. cit., 66.
63. Ibid., 64. According to Shīʿī belief, the Imām of the time inherits the spiritual knowledge (ʿilm) from his predecessors. Cf. Syed Ḥusain Jafrī, "Twelve-Imām Shīʿism", Islamic Spirituality I: Foundations (London, 1987), 165-6.
64. Ittiʿāz, I, 285; Khiṭāṭ, I, 391.
65. Stern, "Cairo", Colloque, 438.
66. Khiṭāṭ, I, 391. Al-Musabbiḥī reports that the Caliph al-ʿAzīz paid for the burial and for the funerary ceremonies over the deceased.
67. In Shīʿī terminology a walī is someone who is nearest to God in love and devotion. Cf. Jafrī, op. cit., 165.
68. Khiṭāṭ, I, 391.
69. Asās al-Taʿwīl, p. 23 ff. as cited by S. M. Stern, "Cairo", Colloque., 439.
70. Nejla M. Abū-Izzedin, The Druzes: A New Study of their History, Faith and Society (Leiden, 1984), 66.
71. For a description of Tanbīḥ al-Ghāfilīn see Gacek, op. cit., I, 124, Entry no. 151.
72. Cf. A. A. Sachedina, Islamic Messianism: The Idea of the Mahdī in Twelver Shīʿism (New York, 1981), 21-3.
73. Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, al-Majālis waʾl-Musāwarat, section 24; Al-Jawdhārī, Sīra, French trans. Canard, 67-8.
74. Khiṭāṭ, I, 408-9. For a French translation and commentary on the khizānat al-kutub see Khoury, op. cit., 123-40.

75. Khitāt, I, 408-9. In his Itti'āz, I, 278, al-Maqrīzī mentions this report of+abbiḥī under the year 383/993.
76. 'Abd al-Jabbār b. Ahmad al-Ḥamadhānī, Tathbīt Dalā'il al-Nubuwwa. Ed. 'Abd al-Karīm 'Uthmān (Beirut, n.d.), vols. I & II.
77. Stern, "Cairo", Colloque, 445. The author has also published a passage on the proofs for the prophecy of Muḥammad from the above-mentioned work of 'Abd al-Jabbār in his article, "New Information about the Authors of the Epistles of the Sincere Brethren", Islamic Studies, (1964).
78. Tathbīt, II, 594-5; there are minor differences in the names of the dā'īs mentioned by Stern, "Cairo", 445.
79. W. Ivanow, "Tenth Century Ismā'īlī Dā'ī in Persia", Studies in Early Persian Ismā'īlism (Leiden, 1948), 164-5.
80. Ibid., 165. In his above-mentioned work, 161-180, Ivanow gives a summary of the contents of al-Mimādhī's Risāla and contrasts it to the section on the Ismā'īlīs in the Farq bain al-Firāq of the anti-Ismā'īlī fourth/tenth century writer 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī.
81. Stern, "Cairo", Colloque, 445.
82. Cf. for example Canard, "Al-'Azīz bi'llāh", E.1<sup>2</sup>, I, 824-5; H. Kennedy, The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates (London, 1986), 325-8.
83. Stern, "Cairo", Colloque, 445.
84. Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt, De Slane's trans. III, 528.
85. On the beginnings of Ismā'īlī da'wa activity in Yemen see S. Jiwa, "The Genesis of Ismā'īlī da'wa activities in the Yemen", BRISMES Bulletin, XV (1988), 50-63.
86. For a detailed discussion on this issue cf. S. Jiwa, "The Initial Destination of the Fāṭimid Caliphate: The Yemen or the Maghrib", BRISMES Bulletin, vol. 13, No. 1 (1986), 15-26.
87. Ḥusain al-Hamdānī and Sulaimān Maḥmūd, Al-Ṣulayḥīyun wa'l-ḥaraka al-Fāṭimiya fi'l-Yaman (Cairo, 1305, AH), 27-61.
88. Ibid., 56-7.
89. Charles L. Geddes, "The Yu'firid Dynasty of Ṣan'ā'". Unpublished PhD thesis, (SOAS, 1959), 157-60; cf. also al-Ṣulayḥiyūn, 57.
90. Geddes, op. cit., 144-5.

91. Ibid, 160-1.
92. Iftitāh, (W. al-Qādī edition), 45.
93. Abbas Hamdani, The beginnings of Ismā'īlī Da'wa in Northern India (Cairo, 1956), 1.
94. Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-Mamālik. Ed. J. H. Kramers (Leiden, 1938), II, p. 410.
95. On the activities of the da'wa in Sind at this time, see the well-researched article by Stern, "Ismā'īlī Propaganda and Fāṭimid Rule in Sind", Studies in Early Ismā'īlism (Leiden, 1983), 177-88.
96. Ibid., 179-80.
97. Ibid., 180. There is some confusion in the primary and secondary sources on the destruction of the famous idol of Mūltān. Cf. Azim Nanji, The Nizārī Ismā'īlī Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent (New York, 1978), 158-9, where the author discusses the controversy.
98. Aḥsān al-Taḳāsim as quoted by Stern, "Fāṭimid Rule in Sind", 183.
99. Tathbīt Dalā'il al-Nubuwwa. Quoted by Stern, "Cairo" 447.
100. A. Hamdani, Beginnings, 4.
101. A. Nanji, Nizārī Ismā'īlī Tradition, 34-5.
102. B. Lewis, "The Fāṭimids and the Route to India", Revue de la Faculté des Sciences Économiques de l'Université d'Istanbul, vol. XIV (1953), 50-4; Abbas Hamdani, "The Fāṭimid-Abbāsīd Conflict in India", IC, XLI (1957), 185-91 and his "Some Considerations of the Fāṭimid Caliphate as a Mediterranean Power", Atti Del Terzo Congresso di Studi Arabi e Islamici (Naples, 1967), 385-96.
103. S. D. Goitein, "The Cairo Geniza as a Source for the History of Muslim Civilization", SI, III (1955), p. 80 and his Studies in Islamic History and Institutions (Leiden, 1966), 344-45.
104. Nizārī Ismā'īlī Tradition, 35.
105. Abu-Izzedin, The Druzes, 70; Madelung, "Ismā'īliyya", E.1<sup>2</sup>, IV, 199. Cf. Stern, "Sind", p. 183, n. 12, where he remarks that according to De Goeje's edition of al-Muaqaddasī's work, the latter is reported to have said the following concerning Mukrān (in 375/985): "I heard that today they say the khutba for the Maghribī" (i.e. the Fāṭimid). On the da'wa in



Baluchistān see the comments of Elliot and Dawson as quoted by Hamdani, Beginnings, 1.

106. Concerning the flourishing trade in the fourth/tenth century Kirmān see B. M. Weisches, "Kirmān", E.1<sup>2</sup>, V, 151. On Khwārazm see C. E. Bosworth, "Kh<sup>w</sup>ārazm", E.1<sup>2</sup>, IV, 1060-5.
107. Al-Masālik. (Kramer ed.), II, p. 310. The authenticity of Ibn Ḥawqal's report does not need to be questioned simply because he was a sympathiser of the Fāṭimid regime. A. Miquel, E.1<sup>2</sup>, "Ibn Ḥawqal", III, 787, sums him up as follows: "... one of the best exponents with his contemporary al-Muḥaddasī of geography based on travel and direct observation (ʿiyān)".
108. "Ismāʿīlīyya", E.1<sup>2</sup>, IV, 199.
109. Cf. fn. 99.
110. "Cairo", 448.
111. Ittiʿāz, 120-1. In the khutba the Shīʿa recite sūras 62 and 63 of the Qurʾān. In his Dāʿāʾim, I, para. 601, Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān prescribes the recitation of these sūras as mentioned by Sanders, op. cit., 57.
112. Ibn Zāfir, 23-4; Al-Dawādārī, 125; Ittiʿāz, 120-1. The Ismāʿīlī formula for the ādhān was the same as the rest of the Shīʿa groups. It consisted of saying hayy ʿalā khair al-ʿamal ("come to the most excellent works") and of pronouncing bi-ismillāh ("in the name of Allāh") in a loud voice. Cf. H. I. Hasan, "The Fāṭimids of Egypt", unpublished D.Litt thesis, University of London, (1927), 125. Hasan published this work in Arabic (Cairo, 1932). It was revised in 1958.
113. Hasan, op. cit., 122.
114. Al-Anṭakī, Taʾrīkh, 407.
115. Khiṭāṭ, II, 341. The saying of the tarāwīḥ prayer is a Sunnī practice. It consists of reciting twenty rakʿa's after the ʿishā' prayer during Ramaḍan. On the tarāwīḥ see A. J. Wensinck, "Tarāwīḥ", E.1<sup>1</sup>, IV, 665.
116. Cf. Hasan, op. cit., 261-2.
117. Khiṭāṭ, II, 270, as cited by Hasan, op. cit., 126-7.
118. See the lengthy account on Abū Ṭāhir al-Duḥlī by Ibn Hajar (Guest ed.), 481-6. Prior to becoming a qāḍī at Fustāṭ. Abū Ṭāhir had served in that capacity in Baghdad Wāsīt and Damascus.



119. Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, 138; Ibn Ḥajar, 584-5, 587-8; for differences in the appointment of qādīs between the ʿAbbāsids and the Fāṭimids cf. Leila al-ʿImād, "The Fāṭimid Vizierate, 969-1172", unpublished PhD thesis, New York University, (1985), 117.
120. Ibn Muyassar, Ta'rīkh, 47; Ibn Ḥajar, 589-91; Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, 223.
121. Al-Dawādārī, 165; Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, 225.
122. Ibn Ḥajar, 589.
123. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, Husn al-Muhādara fī akhbār Miṣr wa'l-Qāhira (Cairo, 1299 AH), II, 120; ʿIdrīs, ʿUyūn, VI, 215-6; Ibn Ḥajar, 585. For different accounts of the resignation of Abū Ṭāhir see Hasan, op. cit., 223-4.
124. Lev, "A political study", 115.
125. Idrīs, VI, 215-6, Ibn Ḥajar, 589; Lev, "A political study", 115, mentions that the supervision of the mint was sometimes entrusted to the qādī in the Ikhshīdīd period as well.
126. Ibn al-Dawādārī, 178, 198, 208 as mentioned by Lev, "A political study", 115.
127. Ibn Ḥajar, 590; cf. Lev, "A political study", 115.
128. Ibid. qādīs from other madhhabs could be appointed to administer the Ismāʿīlī code of law as there are only minor differences between the Sunnī and the Shīʿī codes of law. Cf. Magued, "La fonction de juge supreme dans l'état fatimide en Égypte", L'Égypte Contemporaine L1 (1960), 45; Idrīs, VI, 242; Ibn Ḥajar 595; cf. also Lev, "A political study", 116.
130. Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, 283-4.
131. As in note 129.
132. Sanders, op. cit., 4.
133. On the various modes of propagation employed by the daʿwa see Stern, "Cairo", 234-5.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE RELIGIOUS POLICIES OF AL-ʿAZĪZ VIS-A-VIS THE NON-ISMĀʿĪLĪ MUSLIMS AND THE AHL AL-KITĀB

In the previous chapter the manifestations of al-ʿAzīz's authority as an Ismāʿīlī Imām and the measures he took to introduce Ismāʿīlism at the official level were examined. In addition to his role as an Ismāʿīlī Imām, however, the Fāṭimid Caliph was the sovereign of a vast multi-religious and multi-cultural empire. In this capacity he had to formulate policies concerning the various segments of the population. This chapter will seek to survey the Fāṭimid ruler's strategy as regards his Muslim (non-Ismāʿīlī Shīʿī and Sunnī) subjects and the ahl al-Kitāb (or the ahl al-Dhimma, "the people of the covenant of protection", that is to say in the case of Egypt, predominantly the Christians and the Jews).

When the Fāṭimids conquered Egypt in 358/969, its society was truly pluralistic. The ahl al-Sunna formed the bulwark of the population. The judiciary was chiefly manned by them.<sup>1</sup> There was also a significant non-Ismāʿīlī Shīʿī population residing in Egypt by this time.<sup>2</sup> The financial and clerical bureaux were administered in the main by officials who hailed from the sizeable indigenous Christian population. The well-established Jewish community, equally fluent in Arabic as in Hebrew, formed the backbone of Egypt's active involvement in international trade and

commerce.<sup>3</sup> The Fāṭimids, as the new rulers of Egypt, had accordingly to formulate policies to govern each of these distinct segments of the indigenous Egyptian populace, and to do so in such a manner as to form a cohesive whole. In this endeavour of theirs, the Fāṭimids proved successful. This can be ascertained from the pertinent remarks of Grunebaum to the effect that the lasting success of the Fāṭimids and perhaps even their victory over the Egypt of the Ikhshīdids was largely due to their ability to build and maintain a pluralistic community, or, as Grunebaum qualifies his remark, it may be more accurate to speak of a pluralism of communities under one administration.<sup>4</sup>

The Fāṭimid approach to administering this "pluralism of communities" was based to a certain degree on laissez faire. As the preceding chapter has shown, the early Fāṭimid rulers strove earnestly to establish Ismāʿīlism at the official level. The personal beliefs of their subjects notwithstanding, the first two Fāṭimid Caliphs, al-Muʿizz and al-ʿAzīz, do not seem to have made any attempts - persuasive or compulsive - to convert the masses to Ismāʿīlism. Consequently, the various religious groups within these territories were relatively free to practise their own faiths. Nonetheless, if any of these religious groups transgressed the limits set by the state in the public manifestations of their creed, they were at once censured.

## I The Shīʿa

It is well known that by the time the Fāṭimids came to Egypt, the country had a large, resident Shīʿī element. Not all of these Shīʿa were Ismāʿīlī. In fact, the majority of them belonged to the Ithnā ʿAsharī branch. The advent of the Fāṭimids had positive implications for the Shīʿa. Hitherto, they had been persecuted at times, not particularly at the hands of the Ikhshīdids but more as a result of clashes with the Sunnī majority.<sup>5</sup> As far as the Fāṭimids were concerned, it was not in their interest to play off one group against the other. On the contrary, the Fāṭimids were proud of their own Shīʿī heritage. Consequently, they were keen to display it. This was naturally to the benefit of all the Shīʿī groups in Egypt as it drew upon their common heritage.

The most distinct method that the first two Fāṭimid monarchs of Egypt adopted to proclaim their Shīʿism was the public observance of religious festivals that were peculiar to the Shīʿa. To this classification belong the observance of religious practices at times which the Shīʿa regard as holy, in addition to Ramaḍān: the months of Rajab and Shaʿbān. In the same category fall also the celebration of ʿĪd al-Ghadīr and the commemoration of Imām Ḥusain b. ʿAli b. Abī Ṭālib in the form of ʿāshūrāʾ.



### I i Celebrations of Rajab and Sha<sup>ʿ</sup>bān

Fasting in the months of Rajab and Sha<sup>ʿ</sup>bān was considered as being as meritorious as fasting in Ramaḍān by the Shī<sup>ʿ</sup>a . The beginning and the middle of each of these two months were, as a result, celebrated in the same manner as they were in Ramaḍān. The Friday nights of both of these months were also celebrated.<sup>6</sup> While reporting on the reign of al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz, for instance, al-Maqrīzī states that the people used to go to the mosques on certain nights of these months.<sup>7</sup>

The personal interest that al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz took in the performance of good deeds in the months of Rajab, Sha<sup>ʿ</sup>bān and Ramaḍān is evident from the fact that he arranged for food to be served at the jāmi<sup>ʿ</sup> al-Qāhira in these months.<sup>8</sup> The festivals of mid Rajab and mid Sha<sup>ʿ</sup>bān were not, however, marked by the personal appearance of the Caliph. These celebrations were usually led by the chief Qāḍī, <sup>ʿ</sup>Alī b. al-Nu<sup>ʿ</sup>mān and later by his successor Muḥammād b. al-Nu<sup>ʿ</sup>mān.<sup>9</sup>

### I ii <sup>ʿ</sup>Īd al-Ghadīr

The events at Ghadīr Khumm are too well known to be repeated yet again.<sup>10</sup> Suffice it to say that the words uttered by the Prophet Muḥammad, concerning the subsequent first Shī<sup>ʿ</sup>ī Imām <sup>ʿ</sup>Alī b. Abī Tālib on that occasion, formed the core of the Shī<sup>ʿ</sup>ī view of Imāma. Consequently, 18 Dhu'l-Hijja, the date on which this memorable event took place, was annually celebrated by the

numerous Shī'ī communities.<sup>11</sup> This occasion did not, however, attain the status of an official celebration until the fourth/tenth century. In 352/964 the reigning Būyid ruler at Baghdad, Mu'izz al-Dawla, had the city of Baghdad decorated and fires lit at the majlis al-Shurṭa (police headquarters) to mark the occasion.<sup>12</sup>

In Egypt the festival of Ghadīr was earmarked for celebration by the Fāṭimids from the very year in which al-Mu'izz took up residence there. Ibn Zūlāq recounts the first officially sanctioned celebration of this festival. On the 18th of Dhu'l-Ḥijja 362/September 973 a number of people from Fustāṭ and the Maghāriba (North African troops) gathered for du'ā (invocations) as it was on that date that the Messenger of Allāh had conferred the ʿahd (covenant) on ʿAlī b. Ṭālib, designating him the Amīr al-Mu'minīn (commander of the Believers) and appointing him as his own successor.

Henceforth ʿĪd al-Ghadīr assumed the rank of an annual, state-sponsored festival in Fāṭimid Egypt.<sup>14</sup> In his narrative of the reign of al-ʿAzīz, for instance, al-Maqrīzī notes under most years that the ʿĪd al-Ghadīr was celebrated in the usual manner.<sup>15</sup> The grand celebration of the event of Ghadīr Khumm was naturally encouraged by the Fāṭimids, who traced their lineal descent to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. As the avowed spiritual and physical heirs of the first Shī'ī Imām, it was in Fāṭimid interests to revive annually the public proclamation of the latter's Imāma and Khilāfa

by the Prophet. The ʿĪd provided the Fāṭimids with an ideal opportunity to express their own right to spiritual and temporal authority.

### I iii ʿĀshūrā

The second specifically Shīʿī occasion that was officially sanctioned for public observance in Fāṭimid Egypt was that of ʿāshūrā. The ruthless killing of Imām al-Ḥusain b. Abī Tālib at Karbalā' in 61/680 on ʿāshūrā (the tenth of Muḥarram),<sup>16</sup> by the Umayyad forces, so deeply shocked the Shīʿa of the time and of subsequent generations that to this day the majority of the Shīʿī groups commemorate the event.

The martyrdom of Imām al-Ḥusain had been observed in the form of processions by the Shīʿa of Egypt since the Ikhshīdīd period. This event, however, often became a tool for the persecution of the Shīʿa by the Sunnī authorities. It also provoked the expression of anti-Shīʿa feelings by the public.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, more often than not, the processions ended in violent clashes between the Shīʿa and the ahl al-Sunna.

With the Faṭimid takeover of Egypt, the roles were reversed. There was a Shīʿī dynasty in authority, which had every intention of publicizing their allegiance to Shīʿism. As a result, the observance of ʿāshūrā was, from the very onset of Fāṭimid rule, "granted the nod of approval by a sympathetic government."<sup>18</sup> This

is amply evident from the first instance of the observance of 'āshūrā' after al-Mu'izz's arrival in Egypt. Historians relate that in 363/973-4 the 'āshūrā' procession started from the traditional Shī'a centres of the mausolea of Saīda Nafīsa and Umm Kulthūm. It then proceeded to Fustāṭ, mourning al-Ḥusain. The crowd is then reported to have become violent. It disturbed the commerce in the markets, where clashes broke out. Perhaps the aggression of the Shī'i groups was voiced as an act of vengeance against the former power of their persecutors. In any case, further clashes were prevented by the timely intervention of a high-ranking Maghribī officer, al-Ḥasan b. 'Ammār.<sup>19</sup>

The observance of 'āshūrā' was further solemnised in the reign of al-'Azīz. In 366/976-7, the official mourning ceremony for Imām al-Ḥusain, called ma'tam, was, for the first time in Egypt, officially incorporated into the observance of the 'āshūrā' festival.<sup>20</sup> The introduction of ma'tam in the time of al-'Azīz was in keeping with the latter's overall objective of bringing to fruition the directives initiated by al-Mu'izz in his short reign over Egypt.

At the ideological level, the official observance of 'āshūrā' by the Fāṭimids invoked in the believers' minds the themes of self-sacrifice, atonement and redemption which became such powerful forces in Shī'i belief after Imām al-Ḥusain's massacre.<sup>21</sup> The occasion of 'āshūrā', like that of Ghadīr, also served to stress that to attain salvation the intercession and guidance of



the Imām were vital. Hence total obedience to the Imām was of paramount importance.<sup>22</sup> Ideologically, too, there were many favourable arguments for the Fāṭimids wishing to observe specifically Shīʿī festivals.

One interpretation of the official adoption of these festivals is that they formed the common ground among all denominations of the Shīʿa. They, therefore, presented an opportunity to the sizeable Shīʿī population of Egypt to identify their cause with that of the ruling house. How the Fāṭimids sought to appeal, on the other hand, to the mainstay of the Muslim population, the ahl al-Sunna, will be discussed below.

## II The Ahl al-Sunna

It is well known that Egypt, since its Islamisation, had been a bastion of Sunnism. The majority of the Sunnī population of Egypt adhered to the Shāfiʿī and Mālikī schools of law. The question then arises as to how the Fāṭimids, as the publicly proclaimed Imāms of the Shīʿī Ismāʿīlīs sought to appeal to the loyalties of their Sunnī subjects? What policies did these rulers formulate concerning this single and largest class of people in their empire? As the focus of this thesis is on al-ʿAzīz, more specifically then, how did al-ʿAzīz set about governing the ahl al-Sunna?

To a certain extent the answers to the questions posed above have

been aired in the previous chapter in the discussion on the manifestations of al-ʿAzīz's authority as the Imām. As some of the points outlined there reflect the Fāṭimid Caliph's attitude towards the Muslims in general, they merit mention here as well.

## II i Al-ʿAzīz's Leadership of the Muslim Umma (community)

The Fāṭimids perceived themselves as leaders of the Muslim umma. Accordingly, they diligently sought to perform the various duties that this post required. Al-ʿAzīz proved to be particularly conscientious in this respect. Historians credit him with regularly leading the prayers on the Fridays of Ramaḍān, on the two ʿĪds and at the funerals of high-ranking state officials and close family members. He also personally delivered the khutbas on the ʿĪd al-Adḥā and the ʿĪd al-Fiṭr. Al-ʿAzīz was, moreover, the first Fāṭimid to break the fasts of Ramaḍān with the people at the jāmiʿ al-ʿAṭīq and to arrange for food to be served at the jāmiʿ al-Qāhira during the months of Rajab, Shaʿbān and Ramaḍān. He also performed a number of charitable acts, as befits a good Muslim ruler. In addition, he commissioned the building of a number of religious structures.<sup>23</sup> These, in brief, then, are the deeds of al-ʿAzāz which depict both his personal leadership of the umma and his authority as the Imām.

There are certain other measures of al-ʿAzīz which shed light on his actions as Muslim leader. Al-Muṣabbiḥī reports, for instance, that in 381/991 al-ʿAzīz issued a decree ordering the abolition of

all things that Islam forbids. The historian then mentions a particular instance of an individual who attempted to contravene the official pronouncement. Consequently, fifty thousand jars of his, presumably containing alcohol, were destroyed.<sup>24</sup> Another example that sheds light on the Fāṭimid Caliph's views on the leadership of the umma concerns the issue of heresy. Like his predecessor al-Muʿizz,<sup>25</sup> al-ʿAzīz too denied the belief of the divine nature of the Imām. Nonetheless, this belief was very popular, particularly among the Kutāma Berbers.

Under the year 369/979-80, al-Maqrīzī records that many people began swearing in the name of the Amīr al-Mu'minīn. It was publicly announced, therefore, that those who swore in al-ʿAzīz's name would be punished. The sijill continued, "do not swear except by Allāh alone." This decree must have been firmly enforced, for al-Maqrīzī concludes the report by saying "the people stopped swearing" (in the name of al-ʿAzīz).<sup>26</sup>

## II ii Al-ʿAzīz's Policies Concerning the Ahl al-Sunna

Not all of the Fāṭimid Caliph's policies pertaining to the ahl al-Sunna met with the latter's approval.<sup>27</sup> That is not surprising, however. For al-ʿAzīz was first and foremost an Ismāʿīlī Imām who, as has been shown in the previous chapter, earnestly strove to introduce Ismāʿīlism at the official level. To that end he took certain measures that affected the Sunnī community adversely. He had the Sunnī practice of saying the

tarāwīḥ prayers in Ramaḍān stopped, for instance.<sup>28</sup> In Ṣafar 385/March 995, almost towards the end of his reign, al-ʿAzīz ordered that maledictions against the companions of the Prophet Muḥammad, who were considered by the Shīʿa to have been against ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and his progeny - be inscribed on the walls of the jamīʿ al-ʿAṭīq and in several other places in Cairo and in the provinces.<sup>29</sup>

## II ii 1 The Mālikīs

Of all the Sunnī madhāhib (legal schools) al-ʿAzīz appears to have been most strict towards the Mālikīs. In 381/991, for example, a man was beaten and paraded round the city as he was found to have possessed a copy of Mālik b. Anas' work al-Muwattaʿ.<sup>30</sup> Al-ʿAzīz was not the only Fāṭimid to have adopted a stern attitude towards the Mālikīs. As Canard has pointed out, the two immediate successors of al-ʿAzīz, al-Ḥākim and al-Ẓāhir, adopted the same overall policy towards them too.<sup>31</sup> The reasons for this Fāṭimid attitude towards the Mālikīs can be clearly ascertained.

As the Mālikīs had occupied influential posts in the Egyptian state mechanism well before the Fāṭimid takeover, they felt powerful enough to challenge the Fāṭimids. Consequently, the latter attempted to curb their authority. The first Chief qāḍī of Fāṭimid Egypt, who served in the reigns of al-Muʿizz and al-ʿAzīz, is a case in point. So powerful was this Mālikī qāḍī that the Fāṭimids felt it unwise to remove him from this extremely



prestigious post. Eventually the qāḍī tendered his resignation due to ill-health and old age, whereupon he was at once replaced by an Ismāʿīlī qāḍī, ʿAlī b. al-Nuʿmān.<sup>32</sup>

## II iii The Grievances of the Ahl al-Sunna

If, on the one hand, the powers of the ahl al-Sunna were kept in check, their grievances, on the other hand, received serious attention from the Fāṭimid authorities. The impression that the secondary sources generally present of the early Fāṭimids is that they unreservedly favoured the ahl al-Kitāb to the exclusion, and sometimes even to the detriment, of the ahl al-Sunna. While speaking of the first Fāṭimid vizier, Ibn Killis, who had been appointed by al-ʿAzīz, Goitein, for example, remarks that Ibn Killis made copious use of his former coreligionists (i.e. Jews) as well as the Christians in the administration of the provinces and that this policy was continued by his Christian successor, who appointed a Jew as his deputy in syria. Goitein's statement gives the false impression that the top brass of the Fāṭimid administrative apparatus consisted of Jews and Christians only. Moreover, Goitein states that ʿĪsā succeeded Ibn Killis as vizier. In reality there were five other viziers who were Muslims and who followed Ibn Killis prior to ʿĪsā's appointment to the post.

This observation is particularly applied to the reign of al-ʿAzīz.<sup>33</sup> A well documented episode from his reign will clearly reveal, however, that this was not the case.<sup>34</sup> The fullest

account of the incident has been provided by Ibn Zāfir. He states that the Muslims became extremely concerned when the Christian vizier, ʿĪsā b. Nestorius and his Jewish deputy in Syria, Manashshā b. Ibrāhīm, began to favour their own co-religionists.

These two ministers expelled Muslim scribes and other officials, replacing them instead with members of their own communities. The Muslims decided to draw the Caliph's attention to the injustice done to them. They wrote a note to him saying:

O Amīr al-Mu'minīn. O you who strengthen the Christians through ʿĪsā b. Nestorius and the Jews through Manashshā b. Ibrāhīm and humiliate the Muslims. Will you not see to my affairs?<sup>35</sup>

The note was then thrown at al-ʿAzīz's feet as he rode past. He was very perturbed by its contents. He consulted his chief qādī at the time, Muḥammad b. al-Nuʿmān, on the matter. He admitted to the fact that the Muslims had been wronged. Immediately, therefore, al-ʿAzīz had both ʿĪsā and Manashshā arrested and imposed very high fines on them. He also had all the former Muslim scribes and officials restored to their posts. Eventually al-ʿAzīz agreed to reinstate ʿĪsā to his former position, under the stipulation, however, that the vizier engage the services of the Muslims in his administrative bureaux. Ibn Zāfir concludes his report by saying that henceforth al-ʿAzīz maintained a close surveillance on ʿĪsā.<sup>36</sup>

In terms of the Fāṭimid Caliph's concern for his Muslim subjects, the incident speaks for itself. Al-ʿAzīz was a humane person who

was generally averse to any kind of injustice. This fact is borne out time and again through various other incidents that took place in his reign.<sup>37</sup> Like the other segments of the population, the ahl al-Sunna too knew they could address their complaints to al-ʿAzīz, who would seek to redress them.

### III The Ahl al-Kitāb

The Fāṭimid attitude towards the Christians and the Jews has received a great deal of attention from modern historians.<sup>38</sup> The overall impression given by the majority of these writers is that the Fāṭimid Caliphs adopted a very liberal attitude towards the ahl al-Dhimma. As a result, the latter rose to prominence and often occupied key posts in the state bureaucracy. The truth of the matter is, however, that the ahl al-Dhimma had become well established in the Egyptian administrative structure prior to the Fāṭimids' arrival. It is well-known is the fact that the Christians and the Jews of the various Islamic lands excelled in the administrative and commercial spheres to which they had access and which they regarded as being financially rewarding. Not surprisingly, then, by the time the Fāṭimids arrived in Egypt and took over Syria, the ahl al-Dhimma formed a large and prosperous segment of the population.

It is true that there were more restrictions imposed upon the Dhimmīs in Ikhshīdīd<sup>39</sup> times than during the reigns of al-Muʿizz

and al-ʿAzīz - the heyday of the ahl al-Dhimma. An important factor must be borne in mind in this connection. The Ikhshīdids, though politically independent, were nonetheless reliant on the Sunnī ʿAbbāsīd Caliphate for religious legitimacy. They were therefore compelled to react to the views, justified or otherwise, of the ahl al-Sunna at large, concerning the ahl al-Dhimma. As spiritual and temporal rulers in their own right, the Fāṭimids did not have that constraint.

Goitein questions the liberalism of the Fāṭimids.<sup>40</sup> He asserts that the comparatively liberal spirit of the period was not of Fāṭimid choosing but due to the fact that they represented only a small minority among the Muslim population. This contributed to a trend of tolerance in their conduct of government and to a general leniency towards other minority groups.

The validity of Goitein's statement needs to be questioned. First of all, the premise that because the rulers of a particular dynasty belong to a minority group they, as a matter of course, dealt tolerantly with other such groups, is totally invalid. Examples of such rulers acting, on the contrary, most autocratically with other minorities, are to be found not only in the annals of Islam, but in world history too.

Secondly, Goitein's remarks imply that as the representatives of one of the numerically smaller branches of Islam, the Fāṭimids perhaps did not dare to antagonize the other communities of their



realm. Hence, they had to exhibit more tolerance towards these communities. This assumption is not correct either. For the Fāṭimid Caliphs, especially al-Muḥizz and al-ʿAzīz, were in total command of their territories and their subjects. Examples cited earlier concerning the measures that al-ʿAzīz took to check the increasing authority of the ahl al-Sunna<sup>41</sup> bear ample testimony to the fact that the Fāṭimid ruler did not "tolerate" things that he did not wish to. The instances cited below of the measures that the first two Fāṭimids of Egypt took to limit the power of the ahl al-Dhimma reiterate the point further.

### III i Al-Muḥizz's Attitude towards the Ahl al-Kitāb

The ahl al-Kitāb fared extremely well, on the whole, during the brief reign of al-Muḥizz over Egypt. His policies concerning the Christians and the Jews are evidence of this fact. Al-Muḥizz has been credited with granting permission for the restoration of the church of al-Muḥallaka at Fustāṭ. Despite severe opposition from one particular Shaikh, who vowed to die rather than allow the church to be repaired, al-Muḥizz saw to it that the church was fully repaired.<sup>42</sup> This episode should not be misconstrued to deduce that the Christians were given a free rein in Fāṭimid times. In twentieth century terms the above incident can perhaps be termed as an example of the maxim "freedom to practise one's own religion" as exhibited by the early Fāṭimids.

Although al-Muḥizz safeguarded the rights of the ahl al-Kitāb, he

simultaneously set strict limits on what was permissible to them and what was not. Severus Ibn al-Mukaffā' - a Christian writer contemporary with the early Fāṭimids - reports at length on an instance of a Muslim who turned Christian. The matter was brought to al-Mu'izz's attention. The Caliph ordered the youth to recant. The latter refused repeatedly, whereupon he was publicly beheaded;<sup>43</sup> his example acting as a severe deterrent to others who may have contemplated a similar move.

As a person who was deeply versed in his own religious tradition, yet interested in other faiths, particularly the revealed ones, al-Mu'izz encouraged the learned men of Islam, Christianity and Judaism, to hold dialogues and discussions in his presence.<sup>44</sup> These were held in a generally amiable atmosphere; rude and unjustified remarks about other faiths not being permitted. Sessions of Jewish-Christian dialogue were also encouraged by al-Mu'izz and were often held in his court. A well known example of rivalry between the Christian and the Jewish groups, the former being represented by Patriarch Ephraim and the latter by Moses, came to light at one of these sessions.<sup>45</sup>

As is well known, the ahl al-Dhimma of the time excelled in administrative skills. Al-Mu'izz sought to take advantage of that. He accordingly appointed a Christian, Quzmān b. Mīnā (Cosmas ibn Menas) as one of his chief advisors on financial matters. He then nominated Quzmān as the official responsible for the collection of kharāj in Egypt.<sup>46</sup> The latter served in that

capacity until the accession of al-ʿAzīz.

### III ii Al-ʿAzīz and the Ahl al-Kitāb

In principle, al-ʿAzīz pursued the same humane but firm policies towards the ahl al-Kitāb as his father had done before him. An issue that needs to be aired at the very outset of the discussion on al-ʿAzīz's attitude towards the Christians and Jews, concerns the first Fāṭimid vizier Yaḳūb b. Killis. The vizier's biography is extremely well documented in the sources. It has also received sufficient attention from modern historians so as not to require any further discussion here.<sup>47</sup>

The one facet of Ibn Killis' life that needs to be commented on, however, concerns the religious persuasion of the vizier. Apart from the notable exception of Lev, the majority of the orientalist writers who touch upon the career of Ibn Killis, advertently or otherwise, harp excessively on the vizier's links with Judaism. These writers uncritically assimilate information from some of the biased Christian and Jewish sources.<sup>48</sup> They then present Ibn Killis as a great champion of the Jews merely garbed in the cloak of Islam. Mann and Fischel<sup>49</sup> are particularly guilty of pursuing this line of thought. In discussing the personal frictions between the Coptic Patriarch Abraham and Ibn Killis for example, the overall impression given by Mann is that it was essentially a tussle between Christianity and Judaism; Abraham representing the former and Ibn Killis the latter.<sup>50</sup>

Mann in fact goes to the extent of remarking that Ibn Killis died a Jew and was only outwardly a Muslim. He then adds that Muslim sources deny this assertion.<sup>51</sup> Not surprisingly, for the sources are crystal clear that Ibn Killis converted to Islam in the days of Kāfur the Ikhshīd.<sup>52</sup> How sincere his motives were for conversion is hardly a matter for us to judge. Yet even on that point historians such as Ibn Khallikān and Ibn Taghrībirdī stress that from the time of his conversion Ibn Killis was a good Muslim and that he often passed his nights in the recitation of prayers and the reading of the Qur'ān.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, Lev is justified in remarking that it is impossible to question Ibn Killis' total absorption not only in the Fāṭimid cause as a political movement but also with Ismā'īlism as a creed.<sup>54</sup>

This is amply borne out by his deep involvement in the religious sphere of the Ismā'īlī community, particularly during the reign of al-ʿAzīz. The vizier was sufficiently learned in Ismā'īlī fiqh, for instance, to write a book on the subject.<sup>55</sup> He based this work on the dicta of al-ʿAzīz and his predecessors. In Ramaḍān 369/June-July 980 he read this work to a large audience of learned men assembled at his house. According to Ibn Khallikān and al-Maqrīzī, the book was thereafter used by the fugahā' of the jāmi' al-ʿAṭīq as a source of legal opinion. It was also taught there as a standard work on Ismā'īlī jurisprudence.<sup>56</sup>

In addition, it was on Ibn Killis' advice that al-ʿAzīz established



resident fugahā' at the Jāmi<sup>c</sup> al-Azhar in 378/988-9. Every Friday these fugahā' gave lectures on Ismā<sup>c</sup>īlī law at the mosque. The vizier even contributed financially towards the maintenance of these fugahā'.<sup>57</sup> Ibn Killis' patronage extended to other mosques as well. It was on his order that the maintenance and redecorating work was carried out at various mosques.<sup>58</sup>

Finally, as Lev has pointed out, even the intimate, highly sensitive religious<sup>59</sup> secrets of the dynasty, such as the genealogy of the Fāṭimid Caliphs, were not hidden from Ibn Killis. In 371/981-2, in response to the Būyid ruler ʿAḍud al-Dawla's enquiry concerning the genealogy of the Fāṭimids, it was Ibn Killis who, in conjunction with al-ʿAzīz, put the Fāṭimid genealogy on paper.<sup>60</sup> The vizier was also responsible for the publicity for the newly prepared document.

The vizier's commitment to this issue did not end there. When, for example, the Fāṭimid genealogy was read out from the pulpits of Damascus, it was scorned by one of the ashraf called Ḥamza b. ʿAlī al-Ḥusain al-Sharīf Abu'l-Ḥasan al-ʿAlawī. The sharīf was immediately arrested on the orders of Ibn Killis and exiled to Alexandria, where he died some time later in either 379/989-90 or 380/990-1.<sup>61</sup>

The above discussion of Ibn Killis clearly reveals his total absorption in the religious atmosphere of the Fāṭimid age. In view of this evidence it is rather unjustified of writers like

Mann to assert that Ibn Killis was only outwardly a Muslim. As for the contention that the vizier promoted his former co-religionists, that is the Jews, to powerful posts, only two names spring to mind in this connection - al-Faql Ibn Ṣāliḥ and Manashshā (Mennasse) b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Qazzāz. The former was appointed a qā'id (high ranking military official) by the vizier.<sup>62</sup> The latter, on the other hand, held an important post in the Syrian administration in 370/981.<sup>63</sup> Both these men were appointed to other government posts by al-ʿAzīz after the death of Ibn Killis.<sup>64</sup> The reappointment of the two men makes it obvious that they had been chosen on the basis of merit and not religion.

Moreover, the point is often made that the Christians and the Jews possessed administrative skills. It was the job of the vizier, as the highest administrative official in the state, to appoint the most able people to administrative posts. It does not automatically follow, then, that because the appointee was a Jew, Ibn Killis was favouring the Jews. The one topic, therefore, that will not be discussed under the heading of ahl al-Dhimma is Ibn Killis' supposed favouritism of, to use May's term, his "ehemalige Glaubens - genossen"<sup>65</sup> (erstwhile fellow confessionists), that is, the Jews.

### III iii The Personal Touch of al-ʿAzīz

Al-ʿAzīz undertook a number of measures to maintain his direct hold over the ahl al-Dhimma. In this connection, for instance,

the Fāṭimid Caliph personally appointed to office the Patriarchs of the Melkite Church.<sup>66</sup> Like his father, al-ʿAzīz also sought to safeguard the interests of the ahl al-Dhimma, so long as these did not infringe upon the rights of other segments of the population. He accordingly permitted Patriarch Ephraim to restore the church of St. Mercurius in Fustāṭ. The Caliph even offered the Patriarch the funds necessary for the repair of the church; funds which, according to the Christian sources, the Patriarch politely declined.

Over the years the church had fallen into ruin and had subsequently been used as a warehouse for storing sugar cane. When the Patriarch began the restoration, some of the local people offered resistance to him. Al-ʿAzīz acted in a manner reminiscent of what his predecessor, al-Muʿizz, had done in a similar situation. He commanded a group of his mamlūks to stand guard at the site and to repulse anyone who attempted to hinder the repair work.<sup>67</sup> The extremely humane attitude of both al-Muʿizz and al-ʿAzīz towards the repair of churches in fact led the rather biased Christian writer Severus Ibn al-Muqaffā' to remark that in the reigns of these two monarchs, "there was great peace for the churches."<sup>68</sup>

Some of the most prominent people engaged in the personal service of the Caliph al-ʿAzīz hailed from the ahl al-Dimma. The Christian doctor, Abu'l-Faṭḥ Maṣṣūr b. Muqashshir, for example, was appointed by al-ʿAzīz as his personal physician and as such

was well respected by him. Al-ʿAzīz's successor, al-Ḥākim, also engaged the services of the same Abu'l-Faṭḥ as one of his physicians.<sup>69</sup>

### III iv A Christian Vizier - the Case of ʿĪsā b. Nestorius

Al-ʿAzīz's liberal attitude towards the ahl al-Dhimma can be discerned from the fact that a Christian katīb<sup>70</sup> (scribe), ʿĪsā b. Nestorius, was appointed to the highest administrative post - that of the vizier, in Dhu'l-Qaʿda 385/December 995.<sup>71</sup> As Canard and Grunebaum have pointed out, however, the most powerful of the Būyid amīrs and a contemporary of al-ʿAzīz, ʿAḍud al-Dawla, also entrusted a Christian with the office of vizier. This trend was even occasionally adopted by the "champions of Sunnī orthodoxy", the Saljuqs.<sup>72</sup>

On the other hand, the Fāṭimid Caliph's sense of fair play at once came to the fore when ʿĪsā abused his authority. The latter was accused of appointing, to the exclusion of all others, men of his own faith to key administrative posts. No sooner had this fact been brought to al-ʿAzīz's attention than he had both the Christian vizier and his Jewish deputy in Syria, Ibn Menasseh, arrested. He imposed heavy fines on them both. Only at the intercession of al-ʿAzīz's daughter, Saʿīdat al-Mulk, was ʿĪsā eventually reinstated in his former post. ʿĪsā could not step into office again, however, until he had agreed to abide by the stipulation that he would appoint Muslims to the various



administrative posts. In addition, henceforth, al-ʿAzīz is noted to have maintained a close surveillance over the Christian vizier.

### III v Limitations of the Ahl al-Kitāb

The imprisonment of ʿĪsā and Menasseh by al-ʿAzīz is illustrative of the fact that like the rest of the populace, the ahl al-Dhimma too had to conform to certain rules. If they transgressed these regulations, punishment was imminent. Al-Maqrīzī mentions an incident concerning the ahl al-Dhimma which reiterates the above point. He states that some Christians went to al-ʿAzīz and made certain requests<sup>73</sup> to the Caliph, apparently on the basis that they were from the ahl al-Dhimma. Al-ʿAzīz is reported to have been extremely annoyed at them and threatened to punish them. As one of the persons involved claimed to be very poor, al-ʿAzīz gave him a sum of twenty dinars. He, however, forbade them from ever returning in that manner.

Apart from instances of restrictions imposed on individuals of the ahl al-Dhimma certain constraints were also imposed on them as a community. In 367/977, the second year of al-ʿAzīz's reign, for example, a decree was issued which prohibited the Christians from participating in the rituals of Epiphany (ʿĪd al-ghitās).<sup>74</sup> In 381/991 another official pronouncement forbade the Christians from celebrating the festival of the Cross (ʿĪd al-Ṣalīb).<sup>75</sup> As Lev has pointed out, however, these decrees can be interpreted as a

reflection of the general tendency to fight moral laxity. For, as al-Maqrīzī explains, many vile practices (munkarāt), which were "beyond description", took place at these festivals.<sup>76</sup>

Moreover, the Christians were not permanently banned from observing their holy days. Thus, for instance, in 382/992, the very next year after they had been prohibited from the celebration of the Festival of the Cross, the Christians were permitted to celebrate that particular occasion.<sup>77</sup>

Goitein makes some pertinent remarks as to how the ahl al-Dhimma viewed the restrictions imposed on them by a Muslim government. According to him, the Christians and Jews regarded it as natural, if somewhat burdensome, that certain limitations were imposed on them by the Muslim community in the midst of which they lived, but to which they did not belong. He then adds that the ahl al-Dhimma also discriminated against the Muslims. Thus, as a rule, they would certainly not feel obliged to provide for the poor among the Muslims or to ransom their captives.<sup>78</sup>

As the leader of the empire, al-ʿAzīz also had the duty of safeguarding the rights of the ahl al-Dhimma.<sup>79</sup> This he did with vigilance as the following incident reveals. As part of the war preparations against Byzantium, al-ʿAzīz had authorised ʿĪsā to construct a massive fleet. The fleet was to set sail on Friday 23 Rabīʿ II 386/15 May 996. On that very day fire broke out in the Cairo arsenal, destroying most of the ships. The populace of

Cairo suspected the Byzantine residents of starting the fire. So they attacked them and looted their belongings. In the chaos that ensued, a couple of churches were plundered and a bishop was severely injured. Al-ʿAzīz at once took steps to restore order. He accordingly ordered ʿĪsā to attend to the matter immediately and to deal with the malefactors with an iron hand. As a result, most of the loot was recovered and tranquillity restored.<sup>80</sup>

Grunebaum's remarks on the Fāṭimid approach to the various communities of their empire aptly sums up this chapter. He states that the political and cultural success of the Fāṭimids was due to their unusual capability to utilise to best advantage all the groups, classes, and communities of their lands regardless of race or creed.<sup>81</sup> He then asserts that the Fāṭimids may not have treated all alike and as equals - one with the other - but that they dealt with them equitably as equity was then understood. In Grunebaum's words, then:

All praise is due the Fāṭimids for having known how to induce the communities under their sway to develop their courage and enterprise and to preserve their intellectual élan without damaging that unity of the larger community which hinged on the dynasty's sense of purpose ...<sup>82</sup>

# FOOTNOTES

1. G. E. von Grunebaum, "The Nature of the Fāṭimid Achievement", Colloque., 210.
2. For information on the Shīʿa of Egypt prior to the Fāṭimid takeover, see M. K. Husayn, "Shīʿism in Egypt before the Fāṭimids", Islamic Research Association, series no. 11, Vol. I (1948).
3. Grunebaum, op. cit., 210.
4. Ibid., 209.
5. One particular occasion which inevitably gave rise to Shīʿa-Ṣunnī clashes was that of 'Āshūrā'. For a discussion of this event, see section I, iii. of this chapter.
6. Hasan, "The Fāṭimids of Egypt", 333-4; Lev, "A political study", 116-7.
7. Ittiʿāz, 267, 279.
8. Ibn Muyassar, Ta'rīkh, 52; Ittiʿāz, 294.
9. Cf. Lev, "A political study", 116-7 and his sources. The sources are rather reticent on the details of the celebrations of Rajab and Shaʿbān.
10. For a well-researched account of this event see L. Veccia Vaglieri, "Ghadīr Khumm", E.1<sup>2</sup>, II, 993-4.
11. For the celebration of this ʿĪd at a community level cf. al-Maqrīzī's Khīṭaṭ, I, 388-9, where he states, for example, that on the day of Ghadīr the Shīʿa offered prayers, both during the night and day, they wore new clothes, they exerted themselves to perform good deeds, etc.
12. Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, VIII, 407; E.1<sup>2</sup>, 994; Sanders, op. cit., 223.
13. Khīṭaṭ, I, 389.
14. In her thesis on the Fāṭimid court ceremonial (pp. 217-8), Sanders has drawn attention to the fact that the Fāṭimid celebration of Ghadīr Khumm varied at different times of the dynasty's existence in Egypt. At the beginning of Fāṭimid rule, ʿĪd al-Ghadīr was primarily a popular occasion, the celebration of which met with the authority's approval. By the middle of the first century of Fāṭimid rule, however, the celebration of the event was undertaken by the government itself and had been modelled on the well-established rituals



of the other two <sup>ʿ</sup>Īds - the <sup>ʿ</sup>Īd al-Adhā and the <sup>ʿ</sup>Īd al-Fiṭr. By the end of the Fāṭimid period, however, the festival of Khumm was incorporated by the rapidly declining dynasty into its arsenal of rhetoric against its detractors.

15. Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, 273, 276, 280 and 283.
16. On the event of <sup>ʿ</sup>āshūrā' and the repercussions it had on subsequent Shī<sup>ʿ</sup>ī thought and practice, see Mahmoud Ayoub, Redemptive Suffering in Islam, (New York, 1978). For a Shī<sup>ʿ</sup>ī viewpoint see Shaikh M. M. Shams al-Dīn, The Rising of al-Ḥusayn, English translation I. K. A. Howard (London, 1985). The significance of <sup>ʿ</sup>āshūrā' - the tenth of Muḥarram from a Muslim point of view, as the Day of Atonement, has been discussed by A. J. Wensinck, "<sup>ʿ</sup>Āshūrā'", E.1<sup>2</sup>, I, 705.
17. Lev, "A political study", 111-2 and his sources.
18. Sanders, op. cit., 217-8.
19. Ibn Muyassar, Ta'rīkh, 45; Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, 145-6.
20. Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Nujūm, II, 15. The remarks made by Sanders, (cf. note 14), are equally applicable to the observance of <sup>ʿ</sup>āshūrā'.
21. L. Veccia Vaglieri, "(al-) Ḥusayn b. Abī Ṭālib". E.1<sup>2</sup>, III, 607-15, particularly , 614.
22. Cf. C. Williams, "The Cult of <sup>ʿ</sup>Alīd Saints in the Fāṭimid Monuments of Cairo, Part I: The Mosque of al-Aqmar, Muqarnas I, 38, where she quotes the well-known Shī<sup>ʿ</sup>ī hadiths to the effect that to die without following the Imām of the age was to die "as ignorant carrion" or "the death of the Jāhiliyya".
23. For details of all the meritorious acts of al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz mentioned above, see Chapter 3, sections I, ii, 1-7.
24. Al-Muṣabbiḥī as cited by Ibn Muyassar, Ta'rīkh, 48; Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 271.
25. For examples of heresy committed in al-Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>izz's time, see Lev, "A political study", 119-20.
26. Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 253.
27. For the manner in which the Sunnis and their authorities were viewed in Fāṭimid literature of the time, particularly in al-Qāḍī al-Nu<sup>ʿ</sup>mān's Da<sup>ʿ</sup>ā'im al-Islām, cf. May, op. cit., 132-54.
28. Al-Anṭakī, Tar'īkh, 404.

29. Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Nujūm, II, 31; Al-Maqrīzī, Khitat, II, 286 as cited by Hasan, "The Fāṭimids of Egypt", 263.
30. Ittiʿāz, I, 273; Khitat, II, 341.'
31. "Fāṭimids", E.1<sup>2</sup>, II, 859.
32. For details on Qaḍī Abū Tāḥir see Chapter 3, section III.
33. A Mediterranean Society I, (Berkeley, 1967). 33-4. Cf. Ittiʿāz, I, 292-3.
34. Al-Duwal, 40-1; al-Kāmil, IX, 54, 81; Ibn al-Jawzi as quoted by Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Nujūm, II, 4; Al-Maqrīzī, Ittiʿāz, I, 297 cites Ibn al-Athīr as his source.
35. Al-Duwal, 41.
36. Ibid.
37. Cf. for instance al-ʿAzīz's exemplary treatment of Alptegin - his defeated opponent in Syria. This incident has received wide coverage in the sources. See Ittiʿāz, I, 244-5, Khitat, II, 284-5; al-Kāmil, VIII, 486-7; Wafayūt, II, 483-4; al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 391-2; Ibn al-Qalānīsī, Dhail, 19-21 (de Goeje ed.).
38. Goitein has written a four-volume work called A Mediterranean Society (Berkeley, 1967-1978) on the Jews of the Fāṭimid and Ayyūbid times as well as a number of other books and articles related to the subject, references to which can be found in his above work; Mann wrote on The Jews in Egypt and Palestine under the Fāṭimid Caliphs (London, 1969). May has devoted the first half of his unpublished PhD thesis to "The Policy of the Fāṭimids towards the ahl al-Dhimma, op. cit., 1-131.
39. For an account of Ikhshīdīd Egypt cf. the second chapter of Lev's work, "A political study", 38-60, and the references cited there.
40. A Mediterranean Society, I.
41. Cf. sections II, ii-iv of this chapter.
42. Severus Ibn al-Muqaffā', History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church. Translation by A. S. Atiya et al (Cairo, 1943), vol. II, pt. II, 144-5.
43. Ibid, 152-3. It is rather perturbing that when discussing al-Muʿizz's attitude towards the ahl al-Kitāb a number of present-day historians overlook incidents such as these, thereby giving the false impression that the early Fāṭimid

rulers favoured the ahl al-Kitāb indiscriminately.

44. Cf. E. J. Browne, A Literary History of Persia, I (London, 1951), p. 399 and his references.
45. Ibn al-Muqaffā', 137-144, Mann, I, 17-18, Palestine under the Fāṭimid Caliphs, I (London, 1969), 17-18.
46. Ibn al-Muqaffā', 148. Cf. May, op. cit., 54.
47. Detailed biographical accounts on Ibn Killis are available in the works of Ibn al-Ṣairafī, Ibn Khallikān, al-Kutubī and al-Maqrīzī. For a discussion of the sources on Ibn Killis and a good analytical account of his biography and achievements, see Yacov Lev "The Fāṭimid Vizier Yaḳūb b. Killis and the Beginning of the Fāṭimid Administration in Egypt", Der Islam, 58 (1981), 237-49.
48. Such as Severus Ibn al-Muqaffā', op. cit.; Leroy, "Histoire de Abraham le Syrien, Patriarche Copte d'Alexandrie" in Revue de l'Orient Chrétien (1909).
49. Mann, op. cit.; Walter J. Fischel, Jews in the Economic and Social Life of Medieval Islām (London, 1937).
50. Mann, op. cit., 17-18.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibn al-Ṣairafī, Al-Ishāra, 92; al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 434; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 226. Al-Muṣabbihī as quoted by Ibn Khallikān, IV, 360; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Nujūm, II, 45-6; Ibn al-Asākir as quoted by Ibn Khallikān, IV, 366.
53. Wafayāt, IV, 360; al-Nujūm, II, 45-6.
54. Lev, "Ibn Killis", 238.
55. Wafayāt, IV, 363; Idrīs ʿUyūn, V, 232; Ibn al-Ṣairafī, al-Ishāra, 91; al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh 434; Khiṭaṭ, II, 341.
56. According to al-Anṭakī (Ta'rīkh, 434), the fuqahā' criticized Ibn Killis's work and refused to base their fatwas on it.
57. Khiṭaṭ, II, 273; 341.
58. Lev, "Ibn Killis", 246.
59. Lev is correct in regarding the issue of Fāṭimid genealogy as a religious one, for the dynamics of the concept of imāma hinged on the Fāṭimid claim to be the descendants of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and the Prophet Muhammad's daughter Fāṭima. On the issue of Fāṭimid genealogy, cf. Canard "Fāṭimids", op. cit.,



850-2 and his bibliography.

60. Ibn Ẓafīr, Akhbār, 34-5. See the chapter on "Fāṭimid-Buyid relations in the time of al-ʿAzīz" for details of correspondence between al-ʿAzīz and ʿAḍud al-Dawla and for the relations between the two contemporary powers.
61. Al-Nujūm, II, 45.
62. Ibn al-Qalānisī, Dhail (Amedroz ed.), 27; Ittiʿāz, I, 246; Ibn Khallikān, IV, 362; Ibn al-Dawādārī, Kanz, vi: Al-Durra, 192-3. For his involvement in Syrian affairs see also ibid, p. 198. The verses composed by an Egyptian poet of the time allude to al-Faḍl being a Christian. Cf. Ittiʿāz, I, 298. See also Chapter 2, section VIII, where the verses have been translated.
63. Ibn al-Qalānisī, Dhail, 25; for his role in the subsequent battles for the governorship of Syria see ibid., 26, 28-30; for his dismissal by Ibn Killis see Ibid, 31.
64. On al-Faḍl's reappointment see Lev, "Ibn Killis", 242-3, and his sources. On Mennasseh's re-appointment as Kātib al-Jaish in 381/991 see Ibn al-Qalānisī, Dhail, 40; Ibn al-Dawādārī, al-Durra, 231.
65. May, op. cit., 58.
66. Al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 408, 415.
67. Al-Armānī, op. cit., 118; Ibn al-Muqaffā' op. cit. p. 144, erroneously places the restoration of this church in the reign of al-Muʿizz.
68. Ibn al-Muqaffā', op. cit., 150-1.
69. Ittiʿāz, I, 281; May, op. cit., 64.
70. For a good discussion on the employment of Christian scribes by the Fāṭimids and in contrast, the ʿAbbāsids and the Saljuqs, see Leila al-ʿImād, "The Fāṭimid Vizierate, 969-1172", unpublished PhD thesis, (New York University, 1975), 115-7.
71. Ittiʿāz, I, 283; Al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 441-2; al-Duwal, 40.
72. Canard, Annales de l'Institut d'Études Orientales de l'Université d'Alger, XII (1954), 84-88; Grunebaum, Colloque, 210.
73. Ittiʿāz, I, 275. Exactly what these requests were is unclear in the text.



74. Khiṭaṭ, I, 265; Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 242; for a detailed report on the celebrations of the Coptic Christians in Egypt, see Khiṭaṭ, I, 264-5.
75. Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 271-2; Khiṭaṭ, I, 265.
76. Ibid; Lev, "A political study", 121.
77. Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 276.
78. A Mediterranean Society, II: The Community (Berkeley, 1971), 273-4.
79. For the privileges of the Jewish monks during the reigns of al-Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>izz, al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz and al-Ḥākim as listed in an official decree, see S. M. Stern Fatimid Decrees (London, 1964), 15-22.
80. Cf. Chapter 7, section VII, i, "The burning of the fleet and its aftermath", where the incident is described and the sources mentioned.
81. Colloque, 212.
82. Ibid., 213.

## CHAPTER 5

### FĀṬIMID DIPLOMACY WITH THE ʿABBĀSIDS AND BŪYIDS IN THE REIGN OF AL-ʿAZĪZ

The Fāṭimid conquest of Egypt in 359/969 and the subsequent extension of their power into Syria and the Ḥijāz signified a major step forward in their avowed quest to conquer the heartlands of Islam. Their ultimate political ambition was to depose the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate and take the reins of government of the entire Muslim umma into their own hands instead.

The arrival of the Būyid prince Muʿizz al-Dawla at Baghdad in 334/945, and his assumption of total secular authority, dramatically altered the status of the already weakened ʿAbbāsid Caliph to that of a mere titular head of state. Throughout Būyid rule in Baghdad - that is until 447/1055 - and later, the function of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphs was restricted to representing the religious headship of Sunnī Islam and acting as the legitimising force for the numerous secular rulers who exercised effective sovereignty both in the provinces as well as in the capital itself.<sup>1</sup> The Fāṭimid rulers went a step further than the Būyids. They were the first dynasty who felt powerful enough to deny even titular authority to the ʿAbbāsids. On the contrary, they founded a Caliphate of their own, thus challenging the ʿAbbāsids for the religious leadership of the whole Islamic world. In the realm of secular affairs, however, an examination of Fāṭimid relations with

the centre of the Islamic world involves, in reality, an evaluation of their interaction with the Būyids - the custodians of actual authority at Baghdad at the time.

# I Būyid Origins and History up to the Takeover of Baghdad by ʿAḍud al-Dawla

The Būyids were a dynasty that originated from the southern shores of the Caspian sea, from the region of Dailam.<sup>2</sup> The people of this area were relative late-comers to Islam, having resisted a number of attempts at Islamisation in Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid times. it was not until the late third/early fourth/eighth-ninth centuries that large numbers of Dailamīs converted to the Shīʿī branch of Islam. The impetus for this mass conversion was provided by the arrival of a Zaidī Imām, al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl b. al-Ḥasan b. Zaid, and the subsequent establishment of an ʿAlīd state by him and his successors in the neighbouring province of Ṭabaristān.<sup>3</sup>

The Būyids were one such Dailamī family who embraced Shīʿism at this time. They were of humble origins. Charged with the characteristic zeal of new converts, the Būyids formed part of the large number of Dailamīs who enlisted in the armies of the Muslim East, including those of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate. The founders of the dynasty, Abu'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Būya and al-Ḥasan, initially distinguished themselves in the forces of one of their compatriots

Makān b. Kākī who was supported by the Sāmānids. The Būyids then joined the Gīlānī Mardāwīj, in the latter's struggle against the Zaidī state of Ṭabaristān. Gradually Mardāwīj carved out for himself a vast autonomous principality in central Iran. Confident of his own ability, ʿAlī b. Būya declared his independence from his previous master by occupying Iṣfahān in 321/933. Subsequently, he extended his authority over the entire province of Fārs.

Having thus become the ruler of Fārs, ʿAlī, in order to protect himself from Mardāwīj, and in spite of being a Shīʿī, secured ratification of his authority from the Sunnī ʿAbbāsīd Caliph at Baghdad. ʿAlī was well aware of the Caliph's inability to oppose him. He therefore did not send the tribute which he had promised the Caliph in lieu of the latter's recognition of his rule over Fārs. Subsequently, ʿAlī b. Būya had the Caliph confer on him the title of ʿImād al-Dawla. In the meantime, one of ʿAlī's brothers, al-Ḥasan Rukn al-Dawla, extended his sway over almost the whole of the Jibāl. The youngest of the three brothers, Aḥmad, Muʿizz al-Dawla, entrenched himself in Kirmān and Khuzistān.

It was the last of the above Būyids, Muʿizz al-Dawla, who finally exerted Būyid domination over Iraq. He triumphally entered the capital city of the ʿAbbāsīds in 334/945 and assumed total authority. He even felt powerful enough to depose the reigning ʿAbbāsīd Caliph, al-Mustakfī, and replaced him with another member of the ʿAbbāsīd family, granting him the title al-Muṭīʿ lillāh



(Obedient to God). The title that the first Būyid amīr of Baghdad bestowed on the ʿAbbāsīd Caliph clearly reflects the general Būyid attitude towards the ʿAbbāsīds. The Būyid amīrs viewed the ʿAbbāsīd Caliphs as being subservient to them. Consequently, they accorded very limited authority to them.<sup>4</sup>

As the eldest of the Būyids, ʿImād al-Dawla, had no heir of his own, he appointed instead the eldest son of Rukn al-Dawla, called Fannā-khusraw, ʿAḡud al-Dawla, as his successor. Upon ʿImād al-Dawla's death in 338/949, ʿAḡud al-Dawla, though then aged only thirteen, became the ruler of Fārs.<sup>5</sup> Over the years he steadily consolidated his power and extended his dominions considerably. In 356/967 Muʿizz al-Dawla - the reigning Būyid at Baghdad - died. Prior to that, however, he appointed his son Bakhtiyār, ʿIzz al-Dawla, as his heir.

By this time ʿAḡud al-Dawla reigned supreme over all of southern Iran. He thus felt powerful enough to displace his cousin Bakhtiyār, and annex Iraq to his territories. In 364/925, ʿAḡud al-Dawla found the opportunity he had been seeking. Upon the request of his father, Rukn al-Dawla, ʿAḡud al-Dawla marched to Baghdad ostensibly to assist his cousin Bakhtiyār in quelling a serious revolt of the latter's Turkish troops. ʿAḡud al-Dawla defeated the rebels but then stirred up a mutiny against Bakhtiyār so as to prove his brother's incompetence as a ruler and to compel him to resign. Rukn al-Dawla, the most senior of all the Būyids, strongly disapproved of ʿAḡud al-Dawla's actions, however, and

threatened to disinherit him. Consequently, ʿAḍud al-Dawla was compelled to retract. He agreed to restore Bakhtiyār to his former position under certain conditions, and a temporary settlement prevailed between the two cousins. It was in this interlude of peace between the two Būyids that the Fāṭimid ruler al-ʿAzīz billāh came to power in Egypt.

Immediately after the death of Rukn al-Dawla in Muḥarram 366/September 976, hostilities re-erupted between ʿAḍud al-Dawla and Bakhtiyār. ʿAḍud al-Dawla marched a second time to Iraq and secured a resounding victory over his cousin in Dhu'l-Qaʿda 366/July 977. He thus became the next Būyid sovereign over Iraq.<sup>6</sup> It was after ʿAḍud al-Dawla had secured Iraq that he established diplomatic contacts with the Fāṭimids.

## II Fāṭimid-Būyid Diplomacy in the Reigns of al-ʿAzīz billāh and ʿAḍud al-Dawla

It is a coincidence of history that arguably the greatest sovereign of the Fāṭimid dynasty, al-ʿAzīz billāh, and the most powerful potentate of Būyid rule, ʿAḍud al-Dawla, were contemporaries. It was in the time of these two great rulers that Fāṭimid-Būyid diplomacy reached its high watermark. Prior to ʿAḍud al-Dawla's appearance on the political scene at Baghdad and after his departure from it, the other Būyid amīrs were too involved in interfamilial strife to have any contact - friendly or

otherwise - with the Fāṭimid ruler al-ʿAzīz.

## II i Exchange of Embassies

The first recorded instance of diplomacy between al-ʿAzīz and ʿAḍud al-Dawla is to be found in a letter the Būyid ruler supposedly wrote to his Fāṭimid counterpart circa 367-8/977-8. Unfortunately, this letter does not seem to have been preserved in its entirety by any of the extant sources. Ibn Taghrī Birdī, however, gives a summary of its contents. He says:

ʿAḍud al-Dawla had written a letter to him [ie al-ʿAzīz] acknowledging in it the excellence of the ahl al-bait and confirming to al-ʿAzīz that he (i.e. al-ʿAzīz) was from that pure source. He addressed him [ie al-ʿAzīz] as al-ḥaḍrat al-sharīfa and words to that effect.<sup>7</sup>

The gist of the letter that ʿAḍud al-Dawla wrote to al-ʿAzīz can also be ascertained from al-ʿAzīz's reply to it which arrived at the Būyid court in 369/979-80.<sup>8</sup> Fortunately Ibn Taghrī Birdī has reproduced this letter of al-ʿAzīz in far greater detail than that of the Būyid amīr. He says:<sup>9</sup>

.... his (i.e. al-ʿAzīz's) letter to ʿAḍud al-Dawla who was in the company of the ʿAbbāsīd Caliph al-Ṭāʾi points to his (i.e. al-ʿAzīz's) merit and strength. The contents of the letter, after the basmala were [as follows]: "From the slave and walī (friend) of Allāh, Nizār Abi'l-Manṣūr al-Imām al-ʿAzīz billāh Amīr al-Mu'minīn to ʿAḍud al-Dawla, al-Imām, the protector of the milla (community) of Islam, Abī Shujāʿ b. Abī ʿAlī, greetings to you. The Amīr al-Mu'minīn praises Allāh - there is no god but He - to you and asks Him to bless his (i.e. al-ʿAzīz's) forefather Muḥammad, the messenger of the Lord of both worlds and the Proof of Allāh for all creation, continuous, increasing and everlasting prayers through his right guiding, his pious and pure progeny.

And now to our subject: Your envoy has come in the presence of the Amīr al-Mu'minīn with the messenger sent to you. He has reported what he was to convey of your sincerity

concerning loyalty to the Amīr al-Mu'minīn, your friendship and your acknowledgement of his right to the imāma and your love towards his pious and rightly guided forefathers. The Amīr al-Mu'minīn has been pleased with what he has heard from you and it was in accordance with what he has come to expect of you. You do not deviate from the truth." Then he said many words in the same vein until he said: "I have found out what has happened at the Muslims' borders at the hands of the Polytheists and the destruction of al-Shām, the weakening of its people and the rise in prices. If that was not the case, the Amīr al-Mu'minīn would personally march to the thughūr (borders). He will go to al-Ḥīra.<sup>10</sup> His letter will come to you shortly. So prepare for jihād in the path of Allāh."

Both the précis of ʿAḍud al-Dawla's letter as well as al-ʿAzīz's reply to it offer valuable information on the nature of diplomacy between the two powerful dynasts of the medieval Muslim world. They also offer interesting insights into the terms of negotiation between the two rulers.

According to Ibn Taghrī Birdī, ʿAḍud al-Dawla acknowledged in his letter the excellence of the ahl al-bait and affirmed that al-ʿAzīz was "from that pure source." Moreover, he addressed the Fāṭimid ruler as al-ḥadrat al-sharīfa. This appellation that the Būyid amīr uses to address his Fāṭimid counterpart clearly denotes his acceptance of the Fāṭimid sovereign as a descendant of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.<sup>11</sup>

These sentiments of ʿAḍud al-Dawla are further confirmed in al-ʿAzīz's reply to the Būyid ruler. After the basmala (the usual opening of a letter) al-ʿAzīz thanks the Būyid amīr for "the sincerity and loyalty to the Amīr al-Mu'minīn (that is, al-ʿAzīz), your friendship, your knowledge of his right to the imāma and your love towards his pious ... ancestors."<sup>12</sup> He adds that he is



pleased with what ʿAḍud al-Dawla has to say about him and his progeny and that it is in conformity with what he expects from the Būyid amīr.

The military manoeuvres of the Byzantine forces on the borderlands of the Muslims appears to be a matter of particular import to the Fāṭimid ruler. Accordingly, he expresses his disapproval about the suffering meted out to the Muslims of the thughūr (Muslim-Byzantine frontier) by Byzantium. He then urges the Būyid ruler to join him in a jihād which he intends to undertake personally against the Byzantine forces in retaliation for the havoc which they have caused in al-Shām.

ʿAḍud al-Dawla's response to the above despatch of al-ʿAzīz has been preserved in a tadhkira (memo<sup>andum</sup>) addressed to the Būyid envoy, al-Qāḍī Abū Muḥammad al-ʿUmmānī, who was to accompany the Fāṭimid emissary Abu'l-Walīd ʿUtba b. al-Walīd to the Fāṭimid court.<sup>13</sup> Cahen edited this memo from a collection of Būyid documents which Hilāl al-Ṣābi' incorporated in one of his works. As the memo has already been translated into French by Cahen, it was deemed unnecessary to re-translate it into English. Bearing its importance in mind, a detailed analysis of its contents has been undertaken below.

The earlier part of the memo is characterised by the same kind of respectful tones denoting the noble ancestry of al-ʿAzīz as found in the Būyid amīr's previous correspondence. It praises

al-ʿAzīz's outstanding merit, generosity, friendship and goodwill. ʿAḍud al-Dawla then states that the dispatches of the Fāṭimid sovereign do not offer clear evidence of peaceful relations, friendship and fulfilment of promises that the Būyid amīr expected from him. He therefore urges his envoy, al-Qāḍī al-ʿUmmānī, to take up these issues with al-ʿAzīz and seek clarification for them. We are left in the dark as regards the exact terms of conciliation that the Būyid ruler was seeking from his Fāṭimid counterpart. These were probably transmitted orally, for it is quite clear in the text of the letters themselves that they were to be accompanied by oral messages. In their letters, both al-ʿAzīz and ʿAḍud al-Dawla instruct their envoys to take up certain issues in person with the respective sovereigns.

The Būyid amīr continues by confirming vehemently the need to wage a jihād against the enemies of Allāh, the Byzantines. However, he makes his co-operation on the matter with the Fāṭimids conditional on the latter's fulfilment of his "demanded conditions of friendship, obligation of trust and peaceful affairs."<sup>14</sup> ʿAḍud al-Dawla then refers to the activities of Ismāʿīl dāʿis in his realm. He confirms that the dāʿis can continue propagating their message. The dāʿis of al-Baṣra are an exception to the above ruling, however, for they have transgressed their limits. He then gives instructions to the Qāḍī to deal with this matter upon his return from the Fāṭimid court.

ʿAḍud al-Dawla then alludes to an ʿUqailī with whom he disclaims

any ties of friendship and, in fact, repudiates him. It is quite probable that al-ʿAzīz may have questioned ʿAḍud al-Dawla's involvement in the desertion of the Banū ʿUqail at a critical juncture of the battle which resulted in the defeat and death of one of ʿAḍud al-Dawla's avowed enemies and a prótegé of the Fāṭimids - the Ḥamdānid Abū Taghlib.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, the Būyid amīr makes a vague reference to the "hijriyūn", assuring that he will fulfil his promises to them provided his conditions of "agreement and friendship" are complied with. Cahen remarks that he knows of "no text that explains what this is about".<sup>16</sup> It may well be a reference to one of Bakhtiyār's brothers and ʿAḍud's cousins, Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm and his entourage, who had eventually taken refuge in Egypt after suffering a defeat at the hands of ʿAḍud al-Dawla in 367/977.<sup>17</sup> Either their safe return to the Būyid court without being persecuted by ʿAḍud al-Dawla or their being kept away from it, as suggested by Busse,<sup>18</sup> could well have been a matter of negotiations between the two powers.

## II ii Proposed Confrontation and Subsequent Breakdown of Relations

The next reference to Fāṭimid-Būyid relations is to be found in the year 369/979. Historians report the aggressive designs of ʿAḍud al-Dawla against al-Shām - where the Fāṭimids were involved in gaining ascendancy over other powers, and against Egypt - the

very base of Fāṭimid power.<sup>19</sup> Curiously enough, that was the very year in which the above mentioned Fāṭimid embassy had arrived at the Būyid court and had returned to Cairo with the Būyid amīr's emissary.<sup>20</sup> According to the sources, the main obstacle that held ʿAḍud al-Dawla back from marching to Syria and then Egypt was the eruption of hostilities between him and his brother Fakhr al-Dawla. ʿAḍud al-Dawla was consequently compelled to divert his energies and resources to deal militarily with his brother first.<sup>21</sup>

The diplomatic negotiations between the two powers appear to have come to a complete full stop. In Ṣafar 371/August 981 al-ʿAzīz is reported to have hired a henchman to spirit away a silver lion which was placed on top of the zabzab (a pectoral in the shape of a boat) belonging to ʿAḍud al-Dawla.<sup>22</sup> This zabzab formed a part of the royal emblems of ʿAḍud al-Dawla and by having it stolen the Fāṭimid sovereign was ridiculing the Būyid ruler's authority, pride and alertness.<sup>23</sup>

ʿAḍud al-Dawla appears to have retaliated by sending spies to the Fāṭimid capital and inspiring awe among the people there. Under the year 372/982-3 al-Rudhrāwārī reports at length the tale of a confectioner in Cairo who refused to accept a Būyid coin in payment for some confectionery that one of the men working for ʿAḍud al-Dawla had purchased. Further, he is reported to have abused the Būyid amīr. When the matter was reported to ʿAḍud al-Dawla, he secured the presence of this confectioner at his



court and severely reprimanded him. The Būyid amīr then let him return to Cairo on condition that he would never repeat the offence. Al-Rudhrāwārī ends the report by saying that the confectioner's story became well known in Cairo. As a result, the people there refrained from mentioning ʿAḍud al-Dawla.<sup>24</sup>

## II iii The Issue of Genealogy

To my knowledge, Ibn Zāfir's work is the only source which offers an explanation for the deterioration of Fāṭimid-Būyid relations, placing the blame squarely on the issue of Fāṭimid genealogy. He says that ʿAḍud al-Dawla had questioned the Fāṭimid ruler on his true genealogy and as he was not quite satisfied with the Fāṭimid response, he had then threatened to attack Fāṭimid lands. The Būyid amīr is also supposed to have questioned the ʿAlīds of Iraq on the matter of the genealogy of the Fāṭimids.

In response to persistent enquiries on the part of ʿAḍud al-Dawla, al-ʿAzīz, in consultation with his vizier Yaʿqūb b. Killis, supposedly had a genealogy prepared, linking himself to Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl, a lineal descendant of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.<sup>25</sup> The genealogy thus prepared was apparently to be sent to Baghdad with the Būyid envoy. This envoy did not reach the Būyid court, however, for he was murdered at Tripoli by a Fāṭimid envoy who had accompanied him. Ibn Zāfir contends that the Fāṭimids hoped by their supposed above action to spread their genealogy in the various countries and claimed that the genealogy did not reach

Baghdad because of the death of the Būyid envoy and not because it was false.<sup>26</sup>

If ʿAḍud al-Dawla did question the genuineness of the Fāṭimid descent from ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, that is not evident from the extant correspondence exchanged between him and al-ʿAzīz. On the contrary, in the written correspondence ʿAḍud al-Dawla clearly acknowledges the ʿAlīd descent of the Fāṭimids. It could be argued that the Būyid amīr may have questioned Fāṭimid genealogy in the oral messages that accompanied the letters. If that were the case, though, it is surprising that the Būyid amīr should have felt the need to assent to these claims, and indeed to reiterate them, in the letters themselves. He could just as well have omitted them. It is possible that the issue of genealogy may have been raised in later dispatches between the two rulers. However, that appears highly improbable as the sources are totally silent on the matter.

What can be clearly concluded from the events as they have unfolded so far is that Fāṭimid-Būyid relations began in very amiable terms circa 367-8/977-8, but within a span of three years, that is by the year 371//981, they had deteriorated completely. The question then arises as to what were the reasons that may have prompted the most powerful of all Būyid amīrs, ʿAḍud al-Dawla, to enter into negotiations with his Fāṭimid counterpart, al-ʿAzīz, in the first instance?

## II iv Būyid Acceptance of ʿAlīd Descent of the Fāṭimids

Perhaps an answer to the above question lies in the supposed "temporary" acceptance of the Fāṭimid claims of ʿAlīd descent by the Būyid ʿAḍud al-Dawla. It must be borne in mind that both the Fāṭimids and the Būyids belonged to different denominations of the Shīʿī branch of Islam. The Fāṭimids asserted themselves as Imāms of the Ismāʿīlīs while the Būyids were either of Zaidī or Ithnā ʿAsharī persuasion.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, as the claimed descendants of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima, the Fāṭimids presented themselves as the legitimate political as well as spiritual leaders of the Shīʿa in general, embodying all its hitherto largely unfulfilled hopes and aspirations.

The Būyids, on the other hand, made no claims to religious authority for themselves. In fact, most of them do not appear to have been very zealous about their religious beliefs. It follows that had the Būyid amīr chosen to accept the Fāṭimids as the descendants of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and consequently the legitimate Imāms, they would then necessarily have had to bow to their authority in religious as well as political matters.

It is noteworthy that the Būyids, being Shīʿa, did not replace the Sunnī ʿAbbāsīd Caliph with a Shīʿite one. However, as Kennedy has pointed out, the Būyid amīrs faced the same problems as any ruler who wished to establish an ʿAlīd caliphate. If the Būyids were Twelver Shīʿa, then they acknowledged that their last Imām had

gone into occultation some seventy years earlier, while if they were Zaidīs, then the only Imām whose leadership could be accepted as valid had to be a descendant of al-Ḥusain or al-Ḥasan, who had secured power for himself by his own efforts.<sup>28</sup>

In any case, the first Būyid ruler over Iraq, Mu'izz al-Dawla, contemplated appointing an 'Alīd to the Caliphate after he had deposed the reigning 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mustakfī in 334/945. He was persuaded to abandon the idea by his vizier al-Ṣaimarī who pointed out to him that an 'Alīd Caliph whose claims were accepted as valid would have greater authority than the Būyid amīr himself.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, as relative outsiders in the Islamic world, and with no real claims to nobility, the Būyids could not afford to throw off the yoke of legitimacy which the 'Abbāsīd caliphate embodied without facing repercussions with which they were not yet powerful enough to cope.

All things considered then, it is difficult to imagine that an astute and ambitious politician of the stature of 'Aḍud al-Dawla would place himself under an Ismā'īlī Imām out of choice. Furthermore, by maintaining the nominal authority of the Sunnī 'Abbāsīd Caliph, 'Aḍud al-Dawla placated the majority of his subjects who were Sunnī. As a Twelver Shī'ī, too, his stance of maintaining the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate would be quite valid, for according to the political theory of Twelver Shī'ism, as it had evolved by this time, a ruler who was mafdūl (inferior) could legally be tolerated in the absence of an afdāl (superior) one.<sup>30</sup>



Hence the acceptance that the Fāṭimids belonged to the progeny of the ahl al-bait does not appear to be at all in the interests of the Būyid amīr. Conversely, recognition of Fāṭimid claims by the mighty ʿAḍud al-Dawla would certainly have been most prestigious for the Fāṭimid al-ʿAzīz.

In keeping with his views on kingship and the vesting of total authority in the shāhanshāh (king of kings) - that is, himself - ʿAḍud al-Dawla may have contemplated using his supposed allegiance to the Fāṭimid Caliph as a threat to the total annulment of the ʿAbbāsīd Caliphate. In this way he may have compelled the ʿAbbāsīd Caliph to accept the supreme position of the Būyid amīr with the Caliph being a mere figurehead.<sup>31</sup> There is ample evidence that upon his accession to power at Baghdad, ʿAḍud al-Dawla made the ʿAbbāsīd Caliph grant him unprecedented honours and powers.<sup>32</sup>

However, the very fact that ʿAḍud al-Dawla was desirous and capable of exercising total authority in his domains makes his overtures to the Fāṭimids all the more strange, for that would undoubtedly place him in a subsidiary position vis-à-vis the Fāṭimid ruler.

If, on the other hand, the motives of ʿAḍud al-Dawla for courting the Fāṭimid Caliph were based purely on the grounds of gaining legitimacy for his own rule, then the position of the ʿAbbāsīd Caliph as the religious head of the Sunnī world, yet possessing

very little secular powers, appears to be a much more suitable choice than that of the politically and religiously virile Fāṭimid Caliph. The answer to the question posed above as to the Būyid amīr's need to initiate diplomacy with his Fāṭimid counterpart, has then to be sought elsewhere.

Most sources are reticent on the issue of the overtures made by ʿAḍud al-Dawla to al-ʿAzīz. Ibn Taghrī Birdī finds it most astonishing that ʿAḍud al-Dawla began communications with al-ʿAzīz. What he offers by way of explanation provides a clue, however, to the Būyid amīr's possible reasons for doing so. He states that ʿAḍud al-Dawla only corresponded with al-ʿAzīz because of his inability to oppose him.<sup>33</sup> This chance remark of Ibn Taghrī Birdī also sheds interesting light on the historiographical aspects of the issue of Fāṭimid-Būyid diplomacy at this time.

## II v Historiographical Aspects

It appears rather curious that although Hilāl al-Ṣābi', the court historian of the Būyids, is the original source of information on the overtures of ʿAḍud al-Dawla to his Fāṭimid counterpart, al-ʿAzīz, as well as the latter's response to the Būyid amīr, subsequent historians of the Būyid court such as Ibn Miskawaih and al-Rudhrāwārī, while relying considerably on Hilāl al-Ṣābi' for other information, significantly underplay the issue of the wooing of al-ʿAzīz by ʿAḍud al-Dawla.<sup>34</sup>

So marked is the omission on the part of these historians that not a trace of it is to be found in either of their works except a mention in passing by Ibn Miskawaih that an embassy arrived from the ruler of the west (i.e. Egypt) at the Būyid court in Shaʿbān 369/February-March 980, and that it left in Dhu'l-Qaʿda/May of the same year.<sup>35</sup> Not a word is said about the contents of the message brought by the Fāṭimid envoy nor the fact that his embassy was sent in response to the one dispatched by the Būyid amīr to the Fāṭimid court earlier. Under that very year Ibn Miskawaih also mentions that after ʿAḍud al-Dawla had overpowered all his real and potential enemies, "his thoughts were redirected to the conquest of Egypt especially, and after that to the territory of the Unbelievers, the Byzantines and such as lie beyond them."<sup>36</sup>

Although Ibn Miskawaih then states that ʿAḍud al-Dawla had by this time dropped his intention of marching against Egypt, he does not state at this point in the text - or for that matter, earlier on in the work - as to when ʿAḍud al-Dawla had initially resolved to wage war against Egypt. It is the later historians such as Ibn Taghrī Birdī and Ibn Zāfir who, deriving their information either directly or indirectly from Hilāl al-Ṣābi', discuss the issue of the initial attempts by ʿAḍud al-Dawla to court the Fāṭimid al-ʿAzīz.

This deliberate attempt at suppressing information on the part of Būyid court historians such as Ibn Miskawaih and al-Rudhrāwārī may well be due to the fact that writing as they were, in the heyday

of the mighty ʿAḍud al-Dawla, they, as well as their patron, may have wished to blot out any memories of actions that the Būyid amīr may have taken in his moments of weakness, during the earlier part of his reign. The unusually friendly advances to al-ʿAzīz on the part of ʿAḍud al-Dawla lend themselves to such an interpretation.

### III The Interest and Activities of ʿAḍud al-Dawla in al-Shām vis-à-vis the Fāṭimids

As Cahen has pointed out, it was inevitable that two military expansionist dynasties like the Fāṭimids and the Būyids would clash, as they were both aiming at the domination of common territories - those that lay between Iraq and Egypt.<sup>37</sup> This was particularly true of the militarily active times of al-ʿAzīz and ʿAḍud al-Dawla.

The Būyid amīr turned his attention to al-Shām soon after his accession to power at Baghdad. The interest shown by ʿAḍud al-Dawla in al-Shām sprang from the interlinked considerations of politics and commerce. Politically al-Shām at this time was in a fragmented state. The Fāṭimids were successful only from time to time in asserting their authority over the central and southern parts of the country, whilst its northern territories were either under direct Byzantine rule or at least under its nominal tutelage: the Ḥamdānids of Aleppo were one such dynasty. In relative terms, then, al-Shām was free to be taken by anyone who



felt powerful enough to exert their authority in the region.

For ʿAḍud al-Dawla, the commercial advantages of controlling parts of al-Shām were clearly evident. The years of misrule over Iraq by his cousin and predecessor Bakhtiyār, ʿIzz al-Dawla, had left the country's commerce as well as agriculture in total disarray.<sup>38</sup> Needless to say, the economic situation in Iraq was on the verge of total collapse when ʿAḍud al-Dawla took over as the next Būyid amīr. Undoubtedly, therefore, one of the very first concerns of ʿAḍud al-Dawla was to look for alternative sources of revenue to supplement the depleted ones of Iraq. The various towns of al-Shām - with its centres of commerce and trading, and its considerable agricultural output - must certainly have appeared to the Būyid amīr as a suitable source of desperately needed revenues.

Moreover, since the Fāṭimids had conquered Egypt, they had endeavoured and succeeded in diverting trade from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea.<sup>39</sup> This had dealt a further blow for the Iraqi economy. If, on the other hand, ʿAḍud al-Dawla managed to secure a foothold in some of the coastal towns of al-Shām, such as Tripoli and Antioch, which formed a part of this newly established, thriving trade route, he would stand to benefit considerably from it.

Another significant negative vestige from the reign of ʿIzz al-Dawla, which ʿAḍud al-Dawla had to face, was the total mistrust

and enmity between the two major blocks of the armed forces - the Turks and the Dailamīs.<sup>40</sup> Channelling this divided force's energies into fighting a war in a foreign territory would certainly be a constructive and profitable manner of dealing - at least temporarily - with them.

It could be argued that ʿAḍud al-Dawla could just as well have diverted his energies eastwards towards the lucrative lands of Khurāsān - then under the Sāmānids.<sup>41</sup> There were a number of factors that deterred him from doing so, however, not the least of them being the fact that the Sāmānids were still a considerable force to be reckoned with in his own time. Moreover, in the earlier stages of his career at Baghdad, the Būyid amīr lacked both the resources and the manpower that challenging the Sāmānids would entail. Furthermore, the Būyids had signed a peace treaty with the Sāmānids, according to which neither would encroach upon the other's territories. This was seen to be in the mutual interest of both the dynasties. Al-Shām, then, would have appeared a far more tempting proposition than the East.

#### IV Balance of Power

The politico-military activities of the two powers in the strategic lands of al-Shām circa 367-81/977-8 - the time when ʿAḍud al-Dawla made the preliminary overtures to al-ʿAzīz - clearly reveal that the balance of power was certainly in favour

of the Fāṭimids. A few examples may be given to illustrate the point. By 368/978-9, Alptegin, a former mawlā of the Būyids, who had earlier seized control of Damascus and had declared the khutba there in the name of the ʿAbbāsid Caliph, withstanding all previous attempts by the Fāṭimids to oust him, had finally been defeated and won over by al-ʿAzīz.<sup>42</sup> According to Ibn Khallikān, once Alptegin had established himself in Damascus, he sought the assistance of ʿAḍud al-Dawla in attacking Egypt. He sent the following communication to the Būyid amīr:

Syria is free (from the presence of foreign troops). It is now within our grasp and the rule of the monarch of Egypt has ceased therein; aid me therefore with money and soldiers so that I may attack those people even in the seat of their power.<sup>43</sup>

Nabia Abbott validly comments on the above request of Alptegin:

ʿAḍud, in these critical years (365-7/975-7) of Būyid history, coupled perhaps with mistrust of Aftakīn discouraged the idea...<sup>44</sup>

Consequently, ʿAḍud al-Dawla replied as follows:

Thy power has misled thee, and the result of that undertaking would be thy disgrace; fear therefore the dishonour which may attend it. By this, perhaps, thou mayest be guided.<sup>45</sup>

Qassām succeeded Alptegin in ruling Damascus. Though not a loyal supporter of the Fāṭimids, he nevertheless accepted the suzerainty of the Fāṭimid al-ʿAzīz and had the khutba pronounced in his name.<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile, al-Mufarrij b. Daghfal b. al-Jarrāḥ had established his hold over al-Ramla and its environs. He too paid nominal allegiance to al-ʿAzīz, during the period under discussion.<sup>47</sup>

Similar was the case with Abū Taghlib, the former ruler of Diyār

Bakr, Diyār Rabīʿa and parts of the Jazīra. He had previously forged an alliance with ʿAḍud al-Dawla but by this time had fallen out with the latter and had joined al-ʿAzīz's camp instead.<sup>48</sup> Ibn Miskawaih mentions an interesting tale of the manner in which ʿAḍud al-Dawla attempted to dissuade the Fāṭimid al-ʿAzīz from assisting Abū Taghlib, which in turn reveals the political worth of Abū Taghlib.<sup>49</sup> Up to the year 368/978-9 the Ḥamdānid ruler of Aleppo, Abu'l-Maʿālī Sāʿd al-Dawla, had also acknowledged the nominal suzerainty of the Fāṭimid sovereign over his domains.<sup>50</sup>

The one group that had seriously challenged Fāṭimid authority and had been a constant source of anxiety to them were the Qarāmiṭa. They had joined Alptegin in fighting the Fāṭimid forces. They had also co-operated with ʿAḍud al-Dawla in the latter's wars against the other Būyid princes. After the joint defeat of Alptegin and the Qarmatian forces in 368/979, al-ʿAzīz managed to buy off the Qarmatians by giving them an annual pension.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, at least during the reign of al-ʿAzīz, we do not hear of any serious hostilities from their side.

It emerges therefore that by 368/979 al-ʿAzīz had either managed to win over a number of forces that had previously opposed him or had at least neutralised them. This would explain why ʿAḍud al-Dawla may have felt the need to initiate good relations with the Fāṭimids.



## V The Byzantine Angle

The other possible reason for the negotiations may be sought in the relations of the two powers with Byzantium. The one common professed goal of the Fāṭimids and the Būyids was to wage a jihād against the Byzantines. The need to do so became particularly imperative for al-ʿAzīz and ʿAḍud al-Dawla because of the aggressive policy that the Byzantine rulers pursued against the dār al-Islām in the tenth century - especially in the territories of al-Shām. As can be ascertained from the correspondence exchanged between the two rulers, the subject of jihād comprised an important part of the negotiations. There is a possibility that fighting against a common enemy, the Byzantines, may have contributed to the joining of forces between the two Shīʿī powers - at least temporarily - had it not been for the sudden change of the balance of power circa 369-70/979-80.

### V i The Defeat of Bardas Skleros

The one major factor that tipped the scales of power in favour of the Būyids was the crushing of the rebellion of Bardas Skleros in 369/979 by the forces of the Byzantine emperor. Skleros had been the chief lieutenant and a brother-in-law of John Tzimiskes - the previous Byzantine emperor. On the latter's death Skleros himself aspired for the imperial crown. When he was thwarted in his attempts, he rebelled.<sup>52</sup> After his defeat Skleros appealed for

assistance from ʿAḍud al-Dawla. In return he pledged allegiance to the Būyid amīr. He also promised to hand over to the Būyids all the fortresses at the thughūr that had earlier been under Muslim control but which had subsequently been seized by the Byzantine forces.<sup>53</sup>

The presence of Bardas Skleros at the Būyid court transformed the hitherto hostile attitude of the Byzantines into seeking a pact with the Būyids. Al-Rudhrāwārī gives a graphic account of the Byzantine envoy and the representative of Skleros vying with each other in trying to win ʿAḍud al-Dawla to their respective camps.<sup>54</sup> Understandably, the main aim of the Byzantines in undertaking these negotiations was the handing over of Skleros to Byzantium. ʿAḍud al-Dawla was thus presented with an opportunity to achieve by way of diplomacy what would otherwise have necessitated confrontation. As time elapsed he increased his demands, using Skleros as a bait. Agreements were on the verge of being concluded between the Būyids and the Byzantines when ʿAḍud al-Dawla died in 372/983.

Meanwhile Būyid influence was in ascendance in al-Shām. The Būyid amīr succeeded in 369/979 in getting rid of Abū Taghlib through the services of al-Mufarrij b. al-Jarrāḥ - who too had by now been won over to the Būyid side. Consequently, the latter rebelled openly against the Fāṭimids in 370/980-1.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, by 371/982-3 ʿAḍud al-Dawla was able to diffuse and defeat the syndicate formed against him by his brother Fakhr al-Dawla.<sup>56</sup>

To conclude, it appears as if for a short period time, the two most powerful of the Muslim rulers of the late tenth century had chosen the path of negotiation rather than confrontation. However, within a couple of years after these diplomatic contacts began, they were brought to a standstill. The major reason for that would seem to have been the rising politico-military authority of ʿAḍud al-Dawla. Thereafter he may not have felt the need to pursue further diplomatic contacts with the Fāṭimids. As the Būyid amīr had initiated these negotiations in the first place, he was probably the one who terminated them. Had these negotiations been consolidated into an alliance, however, it would have had a substantial impact on the subsequent course of events. It would also have been a unique occasion in the history of Fāṭimid-Būyid diplomacy.

After the death of ʿAḍud al-Dawla, the Būyid amīrs who succeeded him were too involved in interfamilial and local politics to have any relations - friendly or otherwise - with the Fāṭimids. Consequently, the era of Fāṭimid-Būyid diplomacy in the reign of al-ʿAzīz came to a conclusion with the demise of the greatest of the Būyid amīrs, ʿAḍud al-Dawla.

# FOOTNOTES

1. On the ʿAbbāsids see B. Lewis, "ʿAbbāsids", E.1<sup>2</sup>, I, 15-23, where further references are given. On ʿAbbāsīd authority at the time of the Būyids see ibid., 20; C. Cahen, "Buwayhids", E.1<sup>2</sup>, I, 1350-3.
2. On the origin of the Būyids and their rise to power see M. Kabir, The Buwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad (Calcutta, 1964), 1-6; C. Cahen, "Buwayhids", op. cit., 1350-1 and its references; W. Madelung, "The Assumption of the Title Shāhanshāh by the Būyids and 'the Reign of the Daylam' (Dawlat al-Daylam)", JNES, XXVIII (1969), 89-97; C. Cahen, "ʿImād al-Dawla", E.1<sup>2</sup>, III, 1157. Ibn Miskawaih, Kitāb Tajārib al-Uman, ed. H. F. Amedroz (Oxford, 1921), II, 1-104. English translation D. S. Margoliouth, The Experience of the Nations, V, 1-110. On the military aspect of Būyid rule see C. E. Bosworth, "Military Organisation under the Būyids of Persia and Iraq", Oriens, XVIII-XIX (1965-6), 143-67. H. Kennedy, The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates (London, 1986), 212-20. W. Minorsky, Les Domination Des Dailamites (Paris, 1932).
3. On the Zaidī state of Ṭabaristān see F. Buhl, "al-Ḥasan b. Zayd b. Muḥammad", E.1<sup>2</sup>, III, 245, and R. Strothmann, "Al-Uṭrūsh", E.1<sup>1</sup>, IV, 1060-1.
4. For a critical appraisal of how the Būyids viewed themselves see W. Madelung, op. cit., 84-108, 169-83.
5. On ʿAḍud al-Dawla's assumption of authority and subsequent clashes with his cousin Bakhtiyār, ʿIzz al-Dawla, see H. Bowen, "ʿAḍud al-Dawla", E.1<sup>2</sup>, I, 211-2; C. Cahen, "Bakhtiyār", (ʿIzz al-Dawla), E.1<sup>2</sup>, I, 954-5; Kabir, op. cit., 29-39, 42-7; Madelung, op. cit., 99-104; Kennedy, op. cit., 225-34; Miskawaih, Tajārib, II, 329-378; V, 356-415; Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntaẓam fī Ta'rīkh al-Mulūk wa'l-Uman (Hyderabad, 1358 AH), VII, 75-6; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, VIII, 493-5. Al-Hamadānī, Takmilat Ta'rīkh al-Tabarī. Ed A. Y. Kayani (Beirut, 1961), I, 218-36. Baybars al-Manṣūrī, Zubdat al-Fikra fī Ta'rīkh al-Hijra. MSS. Hunt. 198 (Oxford Univ. Library), ff. 233 obv-235 rev, 238 rev-239 obv.
6. Bakhtiyār was induced by the Ḥamdānīd Abū Taghlib to avenge the defeat at the hands of ʿAḍud al-Dawla. However, their joint forces were routed by those of ʿAḍud al-Dawla at Ṣamārra in Shawwāl 367/May 978. Bakhtiyār met his death on the battlefield and Abū Taghlib, deprived of all his hereditary lands, sought refuge with the Fāṭimids in Syria. See Miskawaih, op. cit., II, 378-92, V, 415-30; Kabir, op. cit., 37-8; Cahen, "ʿAḍud", op. cit., 211; al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 395; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, fol. 240 rev; Ibn



- al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, VIII, 506-10.
7. Ibn Taghrī- Birdī, al-Nujūm, II, 14.
  8. Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, Mir'āt al-Zamān. Reproduced in Ibn al-Qalānisi's Dhail, (Amedroz ed.), 24-5, note 1. It has also been partially preserved in Ibn Zāfir's al-Duwal, 33-34. As C. Cahen, "Une Correspondance Būyide Inédite" Studi Orientalistici in Onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida, I (Rome, 1956), 91-2, has pointed out, the common source of information of all the above historians is Hilāl al-Ṣābi'. The Fāṭimid envoy arrived at the Būyid court in Shaḥbān 369/February 980 and departed with al-ʿUmmānī, his Būyid counterpart, in Dhu'l-Qaḍa/May of the same year. Cf. Miskawaih, Tajārib, II, 412, V, 451.
  9. Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Nujūm, II, 13-14. For the Arabic text of the letter see Appendix B.
  10. On al-Ḥīra see I. Shahīd, E.1<sup>2</sup>, III, 262-3. It is noteworthy that al-ʿAzīz had, according to his letter, resolved to go to al-Ḥīra, for, although there is no evidence in the sources that he did so, al-Ḥīra's location would have made it eminently suitable for challenging Byzantine forces at the thughūr. For a detailed study of the thughūr at this time, see M. Canard, La Dynastie des Ḥ'amdānides de Jazīra et de Syrie (Paris, 1953), I, 241-86.
  11. Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Nujūm, II, 13-14; J. C. Bürgel, Die Hofkorrespondenz ʿAḍud ad-Daulas und ihr Verhältnis zu anderen historischen Quellen der frühen Būyiden (Wiesbaden, 1965), 149, states that the term al-ḥaḍrat al-sharīfa denoted ʿAlīd or Ṭalībī descent at that time.
  12. Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Nujūm, II, 13-14.
  13. This tadhkira has been edited by C. Cahen, "Une correspondance...", op. cit., 93-5, from a manuscript of Būyid documents compiled by Abū Ishāq Hilāl al-Ṣābi'. These kind of memos are an extremely useful source of information on the official policy of the government at the time. Unfortunately very few of these memos are extant. For the Arabic text of the memo see Appendix B.
  14. Ibid., 94.
  15. For details of events leading to Abū Taghlib's death see M. Canard, Les Ḥ'amdānides I, 569-71; and Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, VIII, 513-5. On the involvement of ʿAḍud al-Dawla in getting Abū Taghlib killed at the hands of al-Mufarrij b. Daghfal, see Forsyth, "The Byzantine-Arab Chronicle of Yahyā b. Saʿīd al-Anṭakī", II, 398 and his references.

16. "Une correspondance", 95.
17. Al-Maqrīzī, Ittiḥāz, I, 242-4; Ibn Miskawaih, Tajārib, II, 379, 384-5; V, 416, 422-3; Al-Hamadānī, Takmila, VII, 225-8.
18. H. Busse, Chalif und Grosskönig: die Buyiden im Iraq (945-1055) (Beirut, 1969), 55.
19. Ittiḥāz, I, 252; Ibn al-Qalānisī, Dhail, (Zakkar ed.), 40; al-Durra, 195; Ibn Miskawaih, Tajārib, II, 409, V, 448, states that after fighting against Egypt, ʿAḍud al-Dawla wanted to march against Byzantium.
20. N. Abbott, "Two Būyid Coins in the Oriental Institute", The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature, Vol. LVI (1939), p. 354; T. W. Arnold, The Caliphate (Oxford, 1924), pp. 65-7 and M. Kabir, "The Relations of the Buwayhids with the Fatimids", Indo Iranica, VIII, 4 (1955), 30-1, have relied on either Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntazam, 98-100, or al-Suyūṭī, Taʾrīkh al-Khulafāʾ, English translation H.S. Jarrett (Calcutta, 1881), 427. Thus they place the coronation ceremony of ʿAḍud al-Dawla with the tying of two banners by the ʿAbbāsid Caliph in the Būyid amīr's honour as having taken place in the presence of the Fāṭimid envoy in 369/980. However, as Madelung, op. cit., 103, has pointed out, according to the more authentic report of Hilāl al-Ṣābiʾ, Rusūm dār al-Khilāfa, ed. M. ʿAwwād (Baghdad, 1964), the coronation ceremony took place a couple of years earlier, in 367/977-8. The Fāṭimid envoy could not have been present at the ceremony. Therefore the case that Arnold and Kabir make out for the Fāṭimid envoy being present at the coronation "to form a high opinion of the Caliph and himself (i.e. ʿAḍud al-Dawla) so that any pretension on the part of the Fāṭimid ruler to rival the Eastern Caliphate in pomp and grandeur be nullified" (Kabir, 31), is baseless.
21. Ibn Zafīr, al-Duwal, 35. For eruption of hostilities between ʿAḍud al-Dawla and his brother Fakhr al-Dawla see Miskawaih, Tajārib, II, 415, V, 454-5; al-Rudhrāwārī, Dhail Tajārib, III, 15-17; VI, 8-11; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, f. 247 obv; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, VIII, 519-21.
22. Al-Maqrīzī, Ittiḥāz, I, 261; Ibn Zāfir, al-Duwal, 34-5; Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntazam, VII, 107. On the significance of the zabzab as part of the royal regalia of ʿAḍud al-Dawla see H. Busse, "The Revival of Persian Kingship under the Būyids", Islamic Civilisation 950-1150. Ed. D. S. Richards (Oxford, 1973), 61.
23. On the views of kingship held by ʿAḍud al-Dawla, his pretensions to royalty and the various measures he undertook to achieve this end see Madelung, op. cit., 99-108; Busse,

"The Revival", 57-69.

24. Al-Rudhrāwārī, op. cit., III, 60-4, VI, 59-64.
25. The issue whether the Fāṭimids were the true descendants of the sixth Shīʿī Imām Jaʿfar al-Šādiq through his son Ismāʿīl is a hotly contested one. For a discussion on the matter see M. Canard, "Fāṭimids", E.1<sup>2</sup>, II, pp. 850-2 and his references.
26. Ibn Zāfir, al-Duwal, 34-5.
27. On the religious affiliations of the Būyids see Cahen, "Būyids", 1350-7.
28. Kennedy, op. cit., 218.
29. Al-Hamadānī, Takmila, 149. As H. A. R. Gibb, "Government and Islam under the Early ʿAbbāsids", L'Élaboration de l'Islam (Paris, 1961), 115-6 and Madelung, op. cit., 97, point out, Ibn al-Athīr's hearsay report in his al-Kāmil, VIII, 339, that the Būyid Muʿizz al-Dawla intended to recognise the Fāṭimid al-Muʿizz li dīn Allāh as the Caliph is just a personal reflection of the author and cannot be borne out by historical facts of the time.
30. Ibn Khaldūn, al-ʿIbar, 28-9.
31. ʿAḍud al-Dawla was by no means the first Būyid amīr to curtail drastically the powers of the ʿAbbāsīd Caliph. He was, however, the most successful at it. Cf., for instance, the manner in which Muʿizz al-Dawla had the ʿAbbāsīd Caliph al-Mustakfī dragged from his throne. Ibn Miskawaih, Tajārib, II, 86-7; V, 89-90.
32. Ibn Miskawaih, Tajārib, II, 396; V, 435; Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntazam, VII, 92. ʿAḍud al-Dawla also went to great lengths to claim noble descent for himself. Cf. Madelung, op. cit., 105-8.
33. Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Nujūm, II, 13-14.
34. Hilāl al-Šābi' as quoted by Cahen, "Une correspondance", 91-2. Cf. n. 6a.
35. Ibn Miskawaih, Tajārib, II, 412; V, 451.
36. Ibid., II, 409; V, 448.
37. Cahen, "Būyids", 1355.
38. Kabir, op. cit., 145-8; E. Ashtor, A Social and Economic History of the Near East in the Middle Ages (London), 1976),



177-83.

39. B. Lewis, "Government, Society and Economic Life under the 'Abbāsids and Fāṭimids", CMH, 648. Ashtor, op. cit., 195-201. Although Ashtor, (203) correctly points out that Syria did not benefit commercially as much as Egypt did under the Fāṭimids, nevertheless it is evident from what he states earlier that some of the coastal towns of Syria profited considerably from the lively trade activities sponsored by the Fāṭimids. Some towns of northern Syria such as Ḥims and Aleppo were also important centres of trade with Byzantium.
40. Ibn Miskawaih, Tajārib, II, 323-37; V, 349-66.
41. On the Sāmānids see V. F. Büchner, E.1<sup>1</sup>, IV, 121-4; see also C. E. Bosworth, The Islamic Dynasties (Edinburgh, 1980), 101-2.
42. Itti'āz, I, 249-51; Dhail, (Zakkar ed.), 21-37; al-Kāmil, VIII, 483-7.
43. Wafayāt, II, 483. The same information is repeated by 'Imād al-Dīn Idrīs in his 'Uyūn, VI, 218.
44. Abbott, op. cit., 357.
45. Wafayāt, II, 483.
46. Itti'āz, I, 249-51; Dhail, (Zakkār ed.), 38-40; al-Kāmil, VIII, 512-3.
47. On al-Mufarrij see M. Canard, "Djarrahids", E.1<sup>2</sup>, II, 482-4.
48. Al-Kāmil, VIII, 514; Tajārib, II, 391-2; V, 429-30.
49. Tajārib, II, 394-5; V, 433-4.
50. Forsyth, op. cit., 54-5. On the importance of Aleppo as the gateway to Iraq see Chapter 7, section IV: "Aleppo, the coveted city".
51. Al-Kāmil, VIII, 487.
52. For further information on the issue see Forsyth, op. cit., II, 375-93.
53. Al-Rudhrāwārī, Dhail Tajārib, III, 12-39; VI, 4-35, gives a lengthy account of the rebellion and the negotiations that followed between the Būyids, the Byzantines and Bardas Skleros. Also see al-Ṣābi', Rusūm, 15-17.
54. Dhail Tajārib, III, 23-39; VI, 23-35.



55. That explains the minting of a coin at Palestine in ʿAḍud al-Dawla's name in-371/982 - the subject of Abbott's article, "Two Būyid Coins". On al-Mufarrij's hand in killing Abū Taghlib see Forsyth, op. cit., 398 and his references.
56. Refer to the article on "ʿAḍud al-Dawla" in E.1<sup>2</sup>, I, 211-2.

## CHAPTER 6

### FĀṬIMID POLICIES IN THE MAGHRIB UNDER AL-ʿAZĪZ BILLĀH:

#### ANIMOSITY WITH THE Umayyads

Fourth/tenth century Maghrib (North West Africa) was essentially split between two rival military empires, the Fāṭimids and the Umayyads of Cordoba. Ifrīqiya (present-day Tunisia and eastern Algeria) was the power base of the Fāṭimids and formed an integral part of that dynasty even after their capital was transferred to Cairo. Umayyad hegemony generally prevailed over al-Gharb al-Aqṣā (lands that lay west of Sijilmāsa as far as the Atlantic Ocean). The strength and the assertiveness of the two super powers in the region determined the sphere of influence to which the central Maghrib (al-Gharb al-Adnā) was subjugated.

At the grassroot level the animosity of the two dynasties was translated into warfare between the two long-standing rival Berber confederations - the Sinhāja and the Zanāta. The Fāṭimid move to Egypt made it necessary for them to delegate power in the Maghrib to their Zīrid lieutenants. Subsequently, as Zīrid power grew, so too their desire for autonomy increased. It was against this backdrop of events that the Fāṭimid caliph al-ʿAzīz billāh, was obliged to formulate a strategy concerning the Maghrib.

# I Al-ʿAzīz's Interest in the Maghrib

One of the very first acts of al-ʿAzīz billāh upon his accession to power was to issue vast quantities of dinars and dirhams bearing his name and regnal titles, for official distribution in the Maghrib.<sup>1</sup> This fact outlines the prominence which the Fāṭimid sovereign attached to promoting his authority over the Maghrib. The Fāṭimid Caliph's concern to maintain his hegemony over Maghribī territories is understandable, for notwithstanding the fact that al-ʿAzīz embarked on his caliphal career in Egypt, he was the first member of his dynasty to do so. Although the Fāṭimid conquest of Egypt had been accomplished in 358/969 it was not until 362/973 that al-Muʿizz finally left the Maghrib for Egypt. When al-ʿAzīz succeeded his father in 365/975, then, barely three years had elapsed since the Fāṭimid sovereigns had moved their headquarters from the Maghrib to Egypt.

The opinion expressed by some scholars of Fāṭimid history to the effect that once the Fāṭimids moved east they maintained only a nominal interest in the Gharb (their western territories), almost abandoning it to its fate,<sup>2</sup> is certainly questionable as regards the reign of al-ʿAzīz. For a close scrutiny of the source material<sup>3</sup> reveals that at this point in their history the Fāṭimids had close links with the Maghrib and were keen on maintaining these connections. The sending of the dāʿī Abu'l-Faḥm from Egypt to the Maghrib in 376/986 to challenge the Fāṭimid appointee, the Zīrid Yusūf b. Buluqqīn, who was showing a tendency towards

independent rule,<sup>4</sup> offers one of the prime examples of the sharp yet somewhat discreet surveillance that al-ʿAzīz maintained over the Maghribī lands and over his deputies there. [The details and ramifications of the above event will be discussed a little later in the chapter].

Al-ʿAzīz also appears to have kept a close watch on his Zīrid governor by keeping one of the latter's brothers, Bādīs b. Zīrī, at his court in Cairo. It was to Bādīs that the Fāṭimid ruler gave the distinction of leading the pilgrims from Egypt in 369/979.<sup>5</sup> Yet another example of al-ʿAzīz's vigilance over his Zīrid lieutenant can be seen in the generosity he accorded to Kattāb and Mughnīn, the two brothers of Yusūf b. Buluqqīn, whom the latter had deposed from the Maghrib.<sup>6</sup> Thus, in case al-ʿAzīz ever wished to replace Yusūf, he could have done so by appointing one of his brothers instead. In that manner he would not lose out on the support of those people who generally favoured the Zīrids.

Although al-ʿAzīz certainly appears to have delegated a large amount of power to his Zīrid governor, nonetheless the actions of the latter had to be formally sanctioned by the former. For instance, in 368/978 Yusūf b. Buluqqīn sought al-ʿAzīz's decision on the appointment of a qādī in the Maghrib. Al-ʿAzīz replied that he was transferring that responsibility to Yusūf who should henceforth appoint whom he considered suitable for the post. Yusūf chose a man named Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Kūfī. He then informed the Fāṭimid Caliph of his choice. Al-ʿAzīz officially



sanctioned Yusūf's nomination and sent a sijill of qāḍīship to the Maghrib.<sup>7</sup>

The Fāṭimid takeover of Egypt was preceded by sixty years of the dynasty wielding its authority in the Maghrib. The combination of providing a fairly stable and sound internal policy, keeping a firm check on external threats to their territories and giving impetus to commerce and agriculture enabled the Fāṭimids to reap rich harvests from the general prosperity that ensued.<sup>8</sup> In al-ʿAzīz's time the Maghrib continued to be a profitable source of the following:

- i      Recruitment of Kutāma soldiers
- ii     Revenues from taxation and trade
- iii    Gold

#### I i Recruitment of the Kutāma Soldiers:

The land of Ifrīqiya provided the Fāṭimids with an essential commodity of a state - manpower for the armed forces - in the form of the Kutāma Berbers. The Kutāma were one of the most numerous and powerful tribes of the Sinhāja confederation of Berbers.<sup>9</sup> They were the earliest and on the whole the most staunch supporters of the Fāṭimids in the Maghrib. They also formed the backbone of the Fāṭimid armed forces throughout the Fāṭimids' stay in the Maghrib. Indeed, it was on them that the Fāṭimid Caliph al-Muʿizz had relied for the conquest of Egypt. Even after the

Fāṭimid move to Egypt, the Kutāma continued to play a significant role in the internal as well as external policy of the dynasty.

The Kutāma monopoly over the Fāṭimid armed forces was unchallenged until al-ʿAzīz, on the advice of his skilful vizier Yaʿqūb b. Killis, introduced a Turkish contingent into the forces.<sup>10</sup> The Kutāma, nonetheless, continued to be a force to be reckoned with throughout the reign of al-ʿAzīz.

#### I ii Revenues from Taxation and Trade

From the very inception of their rule in Ifrīqiya the Fāṭimids paid great attention to the fiscal administration of their territories. Accordingly, a conscious and consistent effort was made throughout the Fāṭimid period to maximise the revenues that accrued from the various taxes which the state levied on the population. The Fāṭimids also formulated their entire fiscal policy to derive the maximum advantage from the lucrative trade that flowed through many of their North African territories.

The monetary benefits that the Fāṭimids reaped as a result appear to have been considerable, as can be ascertained by the reports of a contemporary geographer, Ibn Ḥauqal (d. after 378/988). Citing his source as the ṣāhib al-māl (the official in charge of the public treasury) of the Maghrib, Ibn Ḥauqal states that the total revenues of the Maghrib for the year 336/947-8 were evaluated at seven to eight hundred thousand dinars.<sup>11</sup> After furnishing

details of the means of Fāṭimid income, Ibn Ḥawqal indicates that the sum total of the revenues collected from the Maghrib at least equalled, if not surpassed, the above amount, at the time of the Fāṭimid move to Egypt in 359/970.

Fāṭimid interest in the revenues of the Maghrib therefore appears to have been a very likely factor in their determination to keep hold of the Maghrib after they had moved to Egypt. After examining the available economic data on the Maghrib, Messier concludes that "the Fāṭimids extorted more revenue in North Africa than any other Muslim régime up to that time."<sup>12</sup>

Notwithstanding the appointment of a Zīrid lieutenant to rule over Ifrīqiya in his absence, the Fāṭimid Caliph al-Mu<sup>c</sup>izz exercised personal judgement in the appointment of the chief ministers of finance over his Ifrīqiyan provinces.<sup>13</sup> His successor, al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz billāh, whilst granting more territories and a higher degree of autonomy to his Ifrīqiyan governor, nonetheless retained overall control in financial matters. An anecdote from the early period of al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz's reign clearly illustrates this point.

As mentioned previously, one of the first acts of al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz upon his accession to power, was to have dinars bearing his name and regnal titles sent to the Maghrib for distribution. When the governor of al-Qairawān, <sup>c</sup>Abd Allāh al-Kātib, received these dinars, he duly distributed them among the people. Then, however, he held out a piece of cloth into which he flung some dinars and

insisted that everyone in the town contribute to this collection, according to their financial status. In this manner he raised a grand sum of four hundred thousand dinars, which he then sent to the Fāṭimid Caliph. Al-ʿAzīz totally disapproved of this method of raising money. He therefore ordered that the money be sent back to al-Qairawān and returned to the people.<sup>14</sup> He also commanded Buluqqīn b. Zīrī, his Zīrid lieutenant, to put a stop to the oppressive taxation imposed on the people of al-Qairawān by ʿAbd Allāh al-Kātib.<sup>15</sup>

The Fāṭimid move to Egypt also resulted in commercial and financial advantages for the dynasty. As the trade flow between the old and the new capital of the Fāṭimid empire received a great boom, so too the state revenues accruing from it soared. Moreover, as Messier has pointed out, the "gifts" sent to the Fāṭimid caliphs by their Zīrid vassals were of such quantity and sufficient regularity as to be termed tribute.<sup>16</sup> In the first eight years of al-ʿAzīz's reign alone, for example, the sources mention four instances of the arrival of Zīrid gifts at the Fāṭimid court.<sup>17</sup> The substantial sums of money sent are an indication of the above point. In 367/978 Buluqqīn is reputed to have sent al-ʿAzīz four hundred thousand dinars, whilst in 374/984 Buluqqīn's successor, al-Manṣūr, sent the Fāṭimid Caliph one million dinars.



### I   iii   Gold

Gold was an extremely useful commodity for imperialistic medieval powers. The precious metal was essential for propaganda purposes and preferred by dynasties such as the Fāṭimids for minting coins and financing military campaigns. It is not surprising then that:

The Fāṭimids were the first North African régime to exercise a concerted effort to control the routes to the Sudan [via North Africa] and to exploit the gold trade for their own international designs.<sup>19</sup>

Once the move to Egypt had been accomplished, the need for a regular gold supply from West Africa via North Africa was felt acutely enough by the Fāṭimid sovereigns to maintain as firm a hold over their North African possessions as circumstances permitted them. Only after the Zīrids had declared their autonomy from their Fāṭimid overlords in 439/1048 were the latter compelled to procure their gold supplies from the alternate source of Nubia via southern Egypt.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, it was the Spanish Umayyad challenge to Fāṭimid monopoly over the gold trade of West Africa that was a major bone of contention between the two regional superpowers.

### II   Fāṭimid-Umayyad Animosity

The genesis of the conflict between the ʿAlīds of the Banū Hāshim (from whom the Fāṭimids traced their descent) and the Banū Umayya is too well known to be reiterated here.<sup>21</sup> Suffice it to say that

the descendants of the two families, the Banū Fāṭima and the Banū Umayya of al-Andalus, inherited and, in fact, perpetuated this longstanding hostility. Politics and propaganda were the two most prominent media through which the two régimes expressed their animosity against each other.

The Fāṭimid dāʿīs were particularly active in Spain and were instrumental in securing support for the Fāṭimids at the grassroot level. The extent of success that Fāṭimid propaganda achieved in Spain can be gauged by the public expression of Fāṭimid sympathy and Umayyad hostility by "the first great poet of the Muslim West",<sup>22</sup> and the future panegyrist of the Fāṭimid al-Muʿizz, Ibn Hāni' al-Andalusī, whilst he was still residing in Spain. The Umayyad rulers, on the other hand, challenged Fāṭimid authority in the Maghrib by fomenting rebellion among tribes that were subject to Fāṭimid suzerainty. They also induced Fāṭimid commanders to revolt against their sovereign.<sup>23</sup>

Fāṭimid-Umayyad conflict reached its apogee in the time of al-Muʿizz li dīn Allāh (341-365/953-975) and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (300-50/912-961), the two "éminences grises" of the respective regimes.<sup>24</sup> Animosity between the two dynasties, nonetheless, ran high in the time of their respective successors, al-ʿAzīz billāh and al-Ḥakam II (350-366/961-976), as can be ascertained from the following report. Ibn Khallikān relates that al-ʿAzīz reacted to an insulting letter from al-Ḥakam with the contemptuous reply: "You satirise us because you have heard of us. Had we

heard of you, we would respond."<sup>25</sup> The author also cites another version of this exchange of correspondence where the roles of the two Caliphs were reversed.

Though the very satirical dialogue is probably apocryphal, it nonetheless succinctly reflects the mutually hostile attitude of the two régimes. As for the assertion that the two rulers had not yet heard of each other, al-Qādī al-Nuʿmān in his al-Majālis wa'l-Musayarāt mentions exchanges of detailed correspondence that had transpired between al-Muʿizz and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III.<sup>26</sup>

The Fāṭimid conquest of Egypt and their subsequent departure from Ifrīqiya had a profound impact on the politics of the Maghrib as a whole. Consequently, it had a bearing on Fāṭimid-Umayyad relations as well. One of the prime objects of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III's policies in the Maghrib was to defend his lands from Fāṭimid invasions by keeping the latter occupied in dealing with Maghribī affairs. Fāṭimid achievements in the Maghrib as well as their success at empire building in Egypt prompted al-Ḥakam II to revert from the traditional Umayyad policy of merely supporting the Zanāta tribes in their rebellion against the Fāṭimids to a policy of an all-out offensive against the latter.

Dozy is of the opinion that it would have been in Umayyad interests for al-Ḥakam to abandon the Maghrib. He also states that al-Ḥakam's further involvement in the Maghrib was based on honour, pure and simple, rather than any economic calculations.<sup>28</sup>

Whilst pride may have been an important factor in al-Ḥakam's decision, the desire to exploit the extremely rich gold deposits of West Africa - accessible via the Maghrib - must certainly have tipped the scales in favour of direct Umayyad control. The Umayyad ruler would also have been tempted to take advantage of the lucrative trade that passed through many of the Maghribī towns.

Al-Ḥakam consequently embarked on a wave of conquests to increase his influence in the Maghrib. This was done at the expense of the Fāṭimids. As lieutenants of the Fāṭimids in Ifrīqiya, the Banū Zīrī were compelled to meet this new challenge.<sup>29</sup>

## II i The Zīrid Succession

Before his departure for Egypt in 362/973, the Fāṭimid Caliph al-Mu<sup>c</sup>izz appointed Buluqqīn b. Zīrī as his viceroy over all the western territories of the Fāṭimids except Sicily and Tripoli.<sup>30</sup> Buluqqīn's appointment to this senior position was the culmination of Fāṭimid favour bestowed on the Banū Zīrī for their services in fighting the Umayyad-backed Zanāta tribes. The next Fāṭimid Caliph, al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz, not only confirmed Buluqqīn in the post but placed Tripoli, Surat and Ajdabiya under his jurisdiction as well.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the various honours and distinctions showered on Buluqqīn by the Fāṭimid caliphs, he remained primarily the "lord of the



West". As such, the Zīrid chieftain's prime concern was to fight the anti-Fāṭimid elements in central Maġhrib from his headquarters at ʿAshīr.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, the administration of Ifrīqiya was entrusted by him to ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Kātib, who operated from al-Qairawān. As Brett has pointed out, the whole machinery of central government was thus left in the hands of a deputy.<sup>33</sup> Circumstances in the Maġhrib were of such a nature, however, as to leave Buluqqīn little choice to act otherwise.

## II ii Umayyad Policies in the Maġhrib

As mentioned previously, the Umayyad al-Ḥakam II had inaugurated a policy of actively opposing Fāṭimid hegemony in central Maġhrib. After his death in 366/976 his Maġhribī policies were continued by Ibn Abī ʿĀmir - the chief minister of state who subsequently became the regent of al-Andalus under the young boy Hishām II.<sup>34</sup> The Umayyads pursued their above-stated objective by fanning the enmity that existed between the Zanāta and the Sinhāja Berber confederations. Accordingly, they took up the Zanāta cause against the Fāṭimid-backed Sinhāja.

The first instance of the Zanāta challenging Fāṭimid authority in the Maġhrib during the Caliphate of al-ʿAzīz occurred in 367/978. The Maġhribī chief, Khazar b. Fulful b. Khazar al-Zanātī, was successful in evicting the last of the pro-Fāṭimid Banū Midrās rulers, al-Muʿtazz, from the economically strategic town of Sijilmāsa.<sup>35</sup> The victory was more than just a successful military

encounter for the Zanāta. It heightened their prestige in the area and resulted in great financial advantages for them. As much in acknowledgement of Umayyad assistance as to demonstrate his own achievement, Khazar dispatched the skull of his defeated opponent to Andalusia.

The Zīrid response was swift. Buluqqīn set out at once on an expedition to re-establish his authority in the region. The first town that felt his wrath was al-Baṣra, which was razed to the ground on his orders. Next he occupied Fez in Shaʿbān 368/March 979. Sijilmāsa capitulated to him as well. Subsequently the whole of the Bilād al-Hibṭ was conquered by him. By 370/980 Buluqqīn was powerful enough to compel the deposed Zanāta amīrs and their Umayyad allies to seek refuge at Ceuta - the only town that still remained under Umayyad control. Buluqqīn laid siege to this extremely well-fortified Umayyad stronghold to no avail. He therefore withdrew from it with the intention of subsequently leading a naval expedition against it.<sup>36</sup>

Next, the Zīrid commander campaigned against the Barghwata kingdom to the south.<sup>37</sup> This too belonged to the Umayyad sphere of influence.<sup>38</sup> Its ruler Ṣāliḥ b. Abi'l-Anṣār professed a brand of religion of his own. As Ibn ʿIdhārī puts it, "He (Ṣāliḥ) gave them (his people) a sharīʿa and led them astray."<sup>39</sup> After many battles Buluqqīn emerged victorious and the Barghwata leader was killed. Many of their women and children were taken prisoner and sent to al-Qairawān.

In 371/981-2 Buluqqīn received orders from the Fāṭimid al-ʿAzīz to enlist the services of a thousand select cavalry men from the Sinhāja and lead them in a campaign to expel the Umayyads from the Gharb.<sup>40</sup> Although Ibn ʿIdhārī does not report clearly the outcome of this military expedition, it appears that this time the Fāṭimids met with only fleeting success.

Nonetheless, the Zīrid commander's presence in the Maghrib was certainly felt. Buluqqīn subsequently stayed on in the region for the next couple of years, as much to organize the administration of the recently acquired territories as to keep his opponents at bay. Buluqqīn finally set out for Ifrīqiya in 373/983. As was to be expected, no sooner had he departed from the Maghrib than the Zanāta Banū Khazrūn re-entered Sijilmāsa and expelled Buluqqīn's deputy from the town. Buluqqīn therefore retraced his steps to Sijilmāsa. Before arriving there, however, death overtook him on 23 Dhu'l-Ḥijja 373/27 May 984.<sup>41</sup> According to Buluqqīn's wishes, his son Abu'l-Futūḥ al-Manṣūr succeeded him. The Fāṭimid al-ʿAzīz officially confirmed al-Manṣūr's appointment and conferred on him the title ʿUddat al-ʿAzīz billāh ("the instrument of al-ʿAzīz billāh").<sup>42</sup>

As far as the Maghrib was concerned, al-Manṣūr pursued, in principle, the policies laid down by his father. Accordingly, he sent an army under the command of his brother Yaṭṭufat in 374/985 to reconquer strategic towns like Fārs and Sijilmāsa which had slipped from Sinhājī hands at the death of Buluqqīn. The

Umayyad-backed Zanāta, however, had by this time a firm grip on Maghrib al-Aqṣā. Yaṭṭufat's forces were badly defeated by those of the Zanātī chief Zīrī b. ʿAṭiya. Although al-Manṣūr sent reinforcements to his brother, this proved to be of no avail. Fearing a Zanāta backlash, al-Manṣūr took the precaution of moving his army from Ifrīqiya to ʿAshīr. There it remained.<sup>43</sup>

Henceforth, the Zīrid chieftain made no attempts to embark on any military manoeuvres west of ʿAshīr. So adamant was he in this decision of his that he even refrained from giving assistance to Ḥasan b. Qannūn, the last Idrīsid of Fez, in recovering his lands from the Zanāta.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, as Brett succinctly sums up,

Fifty years after the foundation of ʿAshīr to guard against such a threat, the west had reverted to the power of the Umayyads and their Zanāta allies.<sup>45</sup>

While peace prevailed on the warfront, however, other events were brewing up on the domestic front. Unlike his father Buluqqīn, al-Manṣūr preferred to adopt a more independent approach to his Fāṭimid sovereign.

### III Al-Manṣūr's Bid for Independence

In his accession speech al-Manṣūr is reported to have declared that whilst his father and grandfather had obtained the submission of their subjects under compulsion, he would win over the populace by goodwill. He then added "I am not among those who are appointed by a letter and can be dismissed by a letter..." He



went on to say that he had inherited his right to authority from his Ḥimyarite ancestors of Yemen. In other words, al-ʿAzīz would not be able to dismiss him, merely by the stroke of a pen.<sup>46</sup>

Al-Manṣūr also appears to have questioned Buluqqīn's choice of the administrator of their territories. For, soon after assuming leadership, al-Manṣūr had the chief administrator, ʿAbd Allāh al-Kātib, arrested and denuded of his unlimited powers.<sup>47</sup> Although al-Manṣūr reinstated al-Kātib in his former post some time later, he may well have been compelled to do so as the latter was extremely powerful and on very good terms with Egypt. The fact that al-Manṣūr had al-Kātib arrested in the first place is an indication of the Zīrid lieutenant's determination to have his own authority felt in the region. In any case, the final showdown between the two men was not long in coming. Al-Kātib's assistance to a dāʿī from Egypt became a bone of contention between the governor and his administrator.

Dāʿī Ḥasan b. Naṣr Abu'l-Faḥm al-Khurāsānī was sent from Egypt to Ifrīqiya by al-ʿAzīz. His mission appears to have been one of going to Kutāma lands and of preaching to them. On his arrival at al-Manṣūrīya Abu'l-Faḥm was cordially received by al-Kātib's son Yūsuf. It was the latter who had been appointed deputy administrator of Ifrīqiya whilst al-Kātib was at ʿAshīr with al-Manṣūr. In accordance with his father's wishes, Yūsuf provided the dāʿī with all the assistance that the latter needed and dispatched him to Saṭīf, the headquarters of Kutāma power.<sup>48</sup>

When al-Manṣūr arrived at al-Manṣūrīya the following year, he found himself taking the oath of allegiance to Cairo at the hands of al-Kātib who had been granted the rank of a dāʿī by the Fāṭimid ruler.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, according to Ibn ʿIdhārī's report, the closeness between al-Manṣūr and al-Kātib and the unlimited power enjoyed by the latter, became a matter of great envy for other members of the Zīrid household as well as for the court officials. Accordingly, they incited al-Manṣūr against his chief administrator. They even accused al-Kātib of sending dāʿī Abu'l-Faḥm to the Kutāma. Convinced of his administrator's treachery, al-Manṣūr ordered the killing of both al-Kātib and his son Yūsuf on 11 Rajab 377/6 November 987.<sup>50</sup>

This is how the sources relate the tale of al-Manṣūr and al-Kātib. As Brett has clearly pointed out, however, the story has been deformed by subsequent chroniclers of the Zīrid dynasty. Their concern was to expose al-Kātib as a rebel against a legitimate monarch (al-Manṣūr), with the connivance of Cairo.<sup>51</sup> Two possible inferences can be drawn from the above episode. Firstly, that it was a local struggle for supremacy between two powerful men, each of whom was trying to curry favour with Cairo in whatever manner they could; al-Kātib by supporting dāʿī Abu'l-Faḥm and al-Manṣūr by sending vast sums of money to the Fāṭimid court. For example, soon after his accession, al-Manṣūr sent gifts valued at one million dinars to Egypt.<sup>52</sup>

Alternatively, by distinguishing al-Kātib with the rank of a dāʿī

and attempting to make al-Manṣūr submit to him, the Fāṭimid al-ʿAzīz may perhaps have wished to replace al-Manṣūr with al-Kātib, his principal representative in the Maghrib. Judging by the subsequent good relations between the Zīrid chieftain and his Fāṭimid sovereign, however, the rift between al-Manṣūr and al-Kātib appears to have been a domestic affair. Meanwhile, getting rid of al-Kātib did not solve al-Manṣūr's problems with the Kutāma.

#### IV The Kutāma Rebellion

As noted previously, dāʿī Abu'l-Faḥm had gone to the Kutāma lands in 376/986. So successful was he at gaining Kutāma confidence that within a couple of years of being in their midst, he had raised a large army from amongst them and had minted coins there too.<sup>53</sup> As can be expected, news of Abu'l-Faḥm's increasing power and popularity reached al-Manṣūr.

Ibn al-Athīr reports that alarmed by the above developments, al-Manṣūr dispatched a messenger to al-ʿAzīz to appr<sup>ā</sup>ise the latter of the situation and to inform him of al-Manṣūr's intention of leading an army against Abu'l-Faḥm. Soon afterwards, two envoys of al-ʿAzīz arrived at al-Manṣūriya with the message that al-Manṣūr was not to oppose either Abu'l-Faḥm or the Kutāma. Al-Manṣūr did not, however, pay heed to these instructions of the Fāṭimid ruler.<sup>54</sup> It is rather surprising to note that Ibn ʿIdhārī

who gives a more thorough and detailed account of al-Manṣūr's reign generally, does not even allude to the exchange of messengers mentioned by Ibn al-Athīr.

Be that as it may, in 378/988 al-Manṣūr set out to fight Abu'l-Faḥm. The first Kutāma town to feel his wrath was Mīla. Razed to the ground, its people were compelled to seek refuge in the nearby town of Baghāya. Destroying every building he passed, the Zīrid amir finally reached Saṭīf, the headquarters of Kutāma strength. In a bloody battle between Zīrid and Kutāma forces, the latter were totally routed. Abu'l-Faḥm sought refuge with some of the Kutāma tribes on Mount Waḥar. Compelled to surrender, Abu'l-Faḥm was subsequently butchered in the most cruel manner in Ṣafar 378/May 988, al-Manṣūr's ʿabīd (slaves) actually devouring Abu'l-Faḥm's flesh.<sup>55</sup>

Thus suppressed, the Kutāma were not to remain so for long. A couple of years after the defeat of Abu'l-Faḥm, they rallied around one of their fellow men, Abu'l-Faraj. After raising an army, Abu'l-Faraj challenged Zīrid authority in the area by clashing several times with al-Manṣūr's deputy over Mīla and Saṭīf. Finally, the Zīrid amīr decided once again to lead his forces personally against the Kutāma. Accordingly, he set out in 379/989 and in a repeat performance of the ruthless campaign he had conducted previously against the Kutāma, the latter were completely routed. Their leader, Abu'l-Faraj, was brutally put to death and the Kutāma were totally humbled into submission.<sup>56</sup>



This defeat signalled the end of Kutāma hegemony in the Maghrib. Thus after almost a century of having the distinction of being a "favoured" tribe of the Fāṭimids, the Kutāma were relegated to being one of the many subjects of their Zīrid overlord.

A question that needs to be addressed at this stage is: why did al-ʿAzīz send a special envoy to the Kutāma in the first place? He may have done so to acknowledge the Kutāma as a distinctive source of recruits for a major division of the Fāṭimid army stationed in the east. The acknowledgement of the special status of the Kutāma by the Fāṭimid Caliph may have been all the more essential to counterbalance the policies of his vizier, Ibn Killis.

As early as 370/980, for example, Ibn Killis is reported to have made a determined effort to break the Kutāma monopoly over the Fāṭimid armed forces. He did so by recruiting Turks and other elements in the army.<sup>57</sup> He also replaced a number of Kutāma officials by their Turkish counterparts. The reasoning behind this course of action was that it was dangerous for the Fāṭimids to rely totally on the loyalty of one single group of people. Moreover, whilst the Kutāma (or the Berbers in general, for that matter) were good infantrymen, they lacked the skill of the cavalry. The Turks, on the other hand, were renowned for their equestrian skills. Even in military terms, therefore, it was essential for the Fāṭimids to balance their armed forces with both the infantry and the cavalry.<sup>58</sup> Nonetheless, the Kutāma continued

to constitute an essential element of the Fāṭimid armed forces. Viewed in this light, the sending of Abu'l-Faḥm to the Kutāma by al-ʿAzīz makes good sense.

Another possible interpretation may be that al-ʿAzīz wished to get rid of the Zīrid amīr al-Manṣūr. He therefore sent a dāʿī to the Kutāma to prepare them to rise in arms against al-Manṣūr. This interpretation appears to have some validity if one bears in mind the previously mentioned report of Ibn al-Athīr which states that al-ʿAzīz forbade al-Manṣūr to oppose either the Kutāma or Abu'l-Faḥm.<sup>59</sup> This, despite the fact that the latter had raised an army. There is no evidence in the sources, however, that Abu'l-Faḥm was planning to oppose al-Manṣūr and that the latter pre-empted the dāʿī by attacking him first.

Is it possible that the dāʿī may have been sent by al-ʿAzīz to lead the Kutāma against the Zanāta and other Berber allies of the Umayyads in the Maghrib al-Aqṣā? After all, al-Manṣūr had to all intents and purposes abandoned the Gharb to the Zanāta by this time. The Fāṭimid sovereign may well have wished to renew the bid for supremacy in the Gharb against the dynasty's arch rival, the Umayyads. In the final analysis, however, whatever the reasons for the sending of Abu'l-Faḥm, one thing is certain: al-Manṣūr felt sufficiently threatened by the dāʿī to exterminate him swiftly.

# V Fāṭimid-Zīrid Relations after the Defeat of the Kutāma

Diplomatic relations between Cairo and al-Manṣūrīya appear to have been unaffected by the Zīrid amīr's purge of the Kutāma. Soon after the killing of Abu'l-Faḥm, for instance, gifts arrived at the Zīrid court from Cairo, with no mention made of the dāʿī.<sup>60</sup> In 382/992 the Fāṭimid Caliph officially proclaimed Abu'l-Manād Bādīs b. al-Manṣūr as his father's walī ʿahd to the governorship of the Maghrib.<sup>61</sup> Extremely pleased by the appointment of his son, al-Manṣūr sent magnificent gifts to his Fāṭimid sovereign as well as to the latter's heir - the future Fāṭimid Caliph, al-Ḥākim. Al-Maqrīzī gives a description of these presents:

One hundred and fifty mares, *fifteen* saddled female mules, one hundred and eighty horses, fifty mares, fifty female mules dressed in protective armour, three hundred ~~stall~~ saddled mules of which a hundred were carrying chests of money, five hundred and thirty-five camels carrying wheat and other provisions ... a hundred of which were carrying money, hunting dogs, five saddled mares and twenty horses for al-ʿAzīz's son and fifteen slave servants.<sup>62</sup>

The following year al-ʿAzīz reciprocated by sending al-Manṣūr gifts which included an elephant, a large number of riding beasts, various types of cloth, a kiswa for the Kaʿba, crystal, porcelain, robes of honour as well as specially selected mares decorated with gold saddles.<sup>63</sup> Judging by the fairly regular exchange of gifts between the Fāṭimid Caliph and his Zīrid amīr, relations between the two men appear to have been rather cordial.

## VI Conclusion

Al-Manṣūr died on 3 Rabīʿ I 386/26 March 996, just six months before the death of al-ʿAzīz. The last few years of al-Manṣūr's reign were taken up mainly with attempting to resolve an internal crisis within the Zīrid family over the issue of succession. Abu'l-Bahār, an uncle of al-Manṣūr, made a personal bid for power by defecting to the Umayyads. Al-Manṣūr, however, managed to win over his uncle who then transferred his loyalties to al-Manṣūr and the latter's son Bādīs until 389/999, when the Zīrid feud for succession was re-enacted.<sup>64</sup> In the meantime, the amirate passed on fairly smoothly from al-Manṣūr to his son Bādīs at the former's death.

In evaluating Fāṭimid control over the Maghrib, it has to be said that by the end of al-ʿAzīz's reign the Fāṭimids had very little say in the administration of the Maghribī territories. This was left by the Fāṭimid Caliph mainly to his Zīrid amīr. The formal acknowledgement of Fāṭimid supremacy, however, was rigorously maintained by the Zīrids. Thus all the imperial regalia, coins and banners bore the name of the Fāṭimid Caliph. As has been discussed earlier, the Zīrid amīr regularly sent tribute and valuable gifts to the Fāṭimid court as well.

Fāṭimid acceptance of formal suzerainty over the Maghrib makes perfect sense. For in practical terms it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the Fāṭimid Caliph to



scrutinise the affairs of the Maghrib from his base in Cairo. Moreover, besides maintaining control over the existing territories of the Fāṭimids, al-ʿAzīz had to supervise the rather rapid expansion of his empire. More particularly, the Fāṭimid commitment in Syria took up a great deal of al-ʿAzīz's material and monetary resources. Thus, undoubtedly the Fāṭimid-Zīrid arrangement in the Maghrib suited the interests of both parties.

# FOOTNOTES

1. Al-Kāmil, VIII, 489; Ittiʿāz, I, 237.
2. M. Canard, "Al-ʿAzīz billāh", E.1<sup>2</sup>, I, 824; M. A. Shabān, Islamic History, II, (Cambridge, 1976), 189.
3. The most informative sources for al-ʿAzīz's policies in the Maghrib are Ibn ʿIdhārī, al-Bayān, Vol. I, 229-248; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, VIII, 488-99; IX, 8, ff. Some information can also be ascertained from al-Maqrīzī's Ittiʿāz al-Ḥunafāʾ, I, 237 ff.; Ibn Khaldūn, al-ʿIbar, IV, 51 ff.
4. Al-Kāmil, IX, 37-8; al-Bayān, I, 241; Ittiʿāz, I, 263.
5. Al-Kāmil, VIII, 510; Ittiʿāz, I, 253. Al-Maqrīzī (Ittiʿāz, I, 253) reports an incident that reveals Bādīs' astuteness. When the pilgrims had almost reached Mecca they were stopped by highwaymen, who ordered them to hand over all their wealth. Bādīs seemingly agreed. He, however, asked that all the highwaymen line up so he could divide the wealth equally among them. When the men had done so, he had their arms chopped off instead.
6. Al-Bayān, I, 237-8; Ittiʿāz, I, 253.
7. Ittiʿāz, I, 247.
8. Concerning the prosperity of Ifrīqiya under the Fāṭimids see M. Brett, "The Fāṭimid Revolution (861-973) and its Aftermath in North Africa", The Cambridge History of Africa, II, ed. J. D. Fage (London, 1978), 589-633; R. A. Messier, "Muslim Exploitation of West African Gold during the Period of the Fāṭimid Caliphate", University of Michigan, unpublished PhD thesis (1972), 39-42, 64-6, 168-9.
9. Cf. "Kutāma", R. Easset, E.1<sup>2</sup>, V, 540.
10. Al-Bayān, I, 238. On the repercussions of introducing a Turkish contingent in Fāṭimid armed forces see note 58.
11. Kitāb Ṣurāt al-Ard, (Beirut, 1968), 94.
12. Messier, op. cit., 41.
13. For example, it was al-Muʿizz who named Ziyādat Allāh b. al-Gharīm Allāh b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Qādir the minister of taxation and the person in charge of all the regional bureaux of finance in Ifrīqiya. He also appointed ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Khurāsānī over the collection of kharāj, whilst Ḥusain b. Khalaf al-Murṣadī was given the twin tasks of keeping an eye on Buluqqīn as well as being responsible for the armed forces stationed in the environs of al-Manṣūriya. Cf. Ibn Khaldūn,

- al-ʿIbar, IV, 49.
14. Ittiʿāz, I, 242-8; Al-Bayān, I, 230. Al-Maqrīzī reports that when this money arrived at the Fāṭimid court, al-ʿAzīz was making preparations to send an army to Syria. Ibn Killis thus advised al-ʿAzīz to spend the money on the military campaign and to return it from the bait al-māl to Ifrīqiya after the battle was over. Al-ʿAzīz agreed. Al-Maqrīzī does not comment on the incident further, nor do the other sources, so we are left in the dark as to whether the money was ever returned.
  15. Al-Bayān, I, 230.
  16. Messier, op. cit., 42.
  17. Ibid, 43. Messier has collected the data from al-Bayān and al-Kāmil.
  18. Al-Kāmil, IX, 25; al-Bayān, I, 230, 240.
  19. Messier, op. cit., 35.
  20. N. Levtzion, "The Sahara and the Sudan from the Arab Conquest of the Maghrib to the Rise of the Almoravids", Cambridge History of Africa, II, ed. J. D. Fage (Cambridge, 1978), 647-8, whilst speaking of "The Trade of the Sahara" is of the opinion that Fāṭimid interest in Sijilmāsa - the nerve centre of the North African gold trade - decreased considerably after their move to Egypt. This was because the Fāṭimids developed their source of gold and obtained the precious metal from Nubia instead and, perhaps, even from East Africa. Messier's thesis, op. cit., (especially, 149, 169) clearly reveals, however, that the Fāṭimids only let go of Sijilmāsa when they were compelled to do so by the Umayyads and had, of necessity, to procure their supplies from elsewhere.
  21. On the Umayyads see G. Levi Della Vida, "Umayyads", E.1<sup>1</sup>, I, 998-1004. On the Umayyads of Spain see E. Levi Provençal, E.1<sup>1</sup>, I, 1004-12 and his references.
  22. F. Dachraoui, "Ibn Hāni' al-Andalusī", E.1<sup>2</sup>, III, p. 785. Ibn Hāni' is also referred to as "Muṭanabbī al-Maghrib". On Ibn Hāni', his works and sources of information on him, see Poonawala, Biobibliography, 47 ff.
  23. Heck, "Cairo or Baghdad...?", 50-1.
  24. For a detailed analysis of Fāṭimid-Umayyad conflict at this time see Heck, op. cit., 51-5, and his sources.
  25. Wafayāt, (ʿAbbās ed.) V, 372-3; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Nujūm,

- II, 38, corroborates the above report. Heck mistakingly relates that the correspondence occurred between ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Nāṣir and al-ʿAzīz. This is clearly impossible as ʿAbd al-Raḥmān died in 350-1/961 whilst al-ʿAzīz did not accede to Caliphal authority until fourteen years later, i.e. in 365/975.
26. 167-96. Also see H. I. Ḥasan and T. Sharaf, al-Muʿizz li-din Allāh (Cairo, 1948), 311-2.
  27. Messier, op. cit., 36.
  28. R. Dozy, Spanish Islam, English translation, F. G. Stokes (Karachi, 1976), 463.
  29. The Zīrids belonged to the Sinhāja confederation of Berbers. They were a pastoral people who were settled in the central Maghrib. On the Zīrids see G. Marçais, E.1', 1229-30; C. A. Julien, History of North Africa from the Arab Conquest to 1830. Ed. and revised by R. Le Tourneau, English translation J. Petrie (London, 1970), 64-75; H. R. Idris, La Berbérie Orientale sous les Zīrides, X<sup>e</sup>-XII<sup>e</sup> siècles (Paris, 1962), 1-10.
  30. Al-ʿIbar, IV, 49. Al-Bayān, I, 228; al-Kāmil, VIII, 489. Ittiʿāz, I, 237-8. On Zīrid services to the Fāṭimids see Brett, op. cit., 623; Idris, op. cit., 36-51. As a mark of his exceptional services to the Fāṭimids, al-Muʿizz renamed him Ṣaif al-Dawla (Sword of the State), Abu'l-Futūḥ (Man of Victories) Yūsuf.
  31. Al-Kāmil, VIII, 489; al-ʿIbar, IV, 51. Ibn Khaldūn calls Ajdabīya Jarābiya; Ittiʿāz, I, 237-8 quotes Ibn al-Athīr for the above information.
  32. On the founding of ʿAshīr by Buluqqīn's ancestor Zīrī b. Manād and its role as the pivot of Sinhāja authority see Julien, op. cit., 64-6.
  33. Brett, op. cit., 624; on al-Kātib see also Idris, op. cit., 52.
  34. On Umayyad dealings in the Maghrib at this time see al-Bayān, II, 233-94.
  35. Al-Bayān, I, 230-1; al-Kāmil, VIII, 489-90.
  36. Al-Bayān, I, 231-2; al-Kāmil, VIII, 490; Idris, op. cit., 55-7.
  37. Al-Bayān, I, 236; al-Kāmil, VIII, 490. On the background to the Barghwata see al-Bayān, I, 223-7.
  38. Evidence of this can be obtained from Ibn ʿIdhārī's al-Bayān,



- II, 234, where he states that an envoy from the Barghwata presented himself at al-Ḥakam's court in 351/962. He appears to have been received well by the Umayyad ruler.
39. Al-Bayān, I, 236.
  40. Ibid, 238.
  41. Al-Kāmil, IX, 24; Ibn ʿIdhārī, al-Bayān, I, 239 reports Buluqqīn's death under the year 372/982-3. This does not seem likely, however, for whilst reporting on Buluqqīn's successor, al-Manṣūr, he clearly states that the latter assumed power in early 374/984. This would make Ibn al-Athīr's dating of Buluqqīn's death more reliable.
  42. Al-Bayān, I, 239; al-Kāmil, IX, 24.
  43. Al-Bayān, I, 240-1; al-Kāmil, IX, 32; Idris, op. cit., 64-6.
  44. On the Zaidī Idrīsīd dynasty of Fez, cf. D. Eustache, "Idrisids", E.1<sup>2</sup>, III, 1035-7. Soon after the Fāṭimids established themselves in Ifrīqiya, they had compelled the Idrīsīd amīrs to pay homage to the Fāṭimid ruler in 305/917. Thereafter the Idrīsīds vacillated between the Fāṭimids and the Umayyads, giving allegiance to the more powerful of the two regional superpowers of the time. Whilst on a great campaign to secure the entire west for the Fāṭimids, the famous Fāṭimid general, Jawhar al-Šiqqīlī had also totally humbled Idrīsīd power in 347/958. Not to be outdone, the Umayyads retaliated as soon as they felt powerful enough to do so. Thus in 362/972 the well-known Umayyad general Ghālib overran Idrīsīd lands and took the Idrīsīd amīrs as hostages to Spain. Buluqqīn b. Zīrī then re-established Fāṭimid hegemony in Idrīsīd lands in 368/979. In the meantime, the last of the Idrīsīd amīrs, Ḥasan b. Qannūn was banished from Cordova. He therefore took refuge in Fāṭimid Egypt. As can be expected, al-ʿAzīz responded favourably to Ḥasan's pleas for monetary and material assistance in recovering his kingdom. Thus outfitted, Ḥasan set out to fight. He was, however, defeated by Umayyad forces. Compelled to surrender, Ḥasan was taken to Spain and beheaded at the orders of al-ʿAmīr in 375/985. Thus the Idrīsīd dynasty came to an end. On Ḥasan b. Qannūn see al-Bayān, II, 244-6, 281; Dozy, op. cit., 502-3; Eustache, op. cit., 1036-7. See also the lengthy footnote on Ḥasan by H. Mu'nīs' in his edition of Ibn al-ʿAbbār's Kitāb al-Ḥullat al-Sayrā', I, 226-7.
  45. Brett, op. cit., 625.
  46. Al-Bayān, I, 240; al-Kāmil, IX, 25.
  47. Al-Bayān, I, 239-40.

48. Al-Kāmil, IX, 37; al-Bayān, I, 241; Ittiḥāz, I, 263.
49. Brett, op. cit., 625.
50. Al-Bayān, I, 242; al-Kāmil, IX, 35.
51. Brett, op. cit., 625.
52. Al-Bayān, I, 240; al-Kāmil, IX, 25.
53. Ittiḥāz, I, 263; al-Kāmil, IX, 37; al-Bayān, I, 241.
54. Al-Kāmil, IX, 37. Al-Maqrīzī (Ittiḥāz, I, 263) mentions that in 377/987, al-ʿAzīz sent Abu'l-ʿAzam and Muḥammad b. Maimūn al-Wazzān to the Zīrīd al-Manṣūr. He does not mention the contents of the Fāṭimid message, however.
55. Al-Bayān, I, 243-4; al-Kāmil, IX, 37-8.
56. Al-Kāmil, IX, 47-8.
57. Ittiḥāz, I, 261; al-Bayān, I, 238.
58. For a detailed analysis of the incorporation of the Turks into Fāṭimid armies during al-ʿAzīz's time see Y. Lev, "The Fāṭimid Army, A.H. 358-427/968-1036 C. E.: Military and Social Aspects", Asian and African Studies, Journal of the Israeli Oriental Society, 14 (1980), 169-79, and also B. I. Beshir, "The Fāṭimid Military Organization", Der Islam, 55 (1978), 37-56.
59. Cf. n. 54.
60. Al-Kāmil, IX, 38.
61. Al-Bayān, I, 246; Ittiḥāz, I, 276.
62. Ittiḥāz, I, 278-9.
63. Ibid., 282-3.
64. On Abu'l-Bahār see al-Bayān, I, 244-5; 247 ff; al-Kāmil, IX, 48 and 89-90; Brett, op. cit., 626-7; Idris, op. cit., 79-82.

## CHAPTER 7

### FĀṬIMID-BYZANTINE RELATIONS DURING THE REIGN OF AL-ʿAZĪZ BILLĀH

The Fāṭimid conquest of Egypt in 358/969 meant a continuation of diplomacy with their familiar neighbour in the Maghrib - Byzantium.<sup>1</sup> Once in Egypt, the Fāṭimids, according to their avowed ambition of expanding eastwards, began military operations in al-Shām (Greater Syria). Coincidentally, Byzantium too had become particularly interested in and capable of pursuing an expansionist policy in al-Shām at this time. Conflicts of interests of these two major powers of the fourth/tenth century inevitably led to military confrontation between them. These were punctuated by brief periods of reconciliation. In this chapter the description of Fāṭimid-Byzantine diplomacy will be undertaken. This is done with a view to providing a sound background for analysing the relations between these two superpowers in al-ʿAzīz's time.

#### I Causes of Fāṭimid Byzantine Conflict in al-Shām

The one common factor for Fāṭimid and Byzantine involvement in al-Shām was the issue of security. With their arrival in Egypt the Fāṭimids realized that the geographical structure of the country was such that their authority over it would be seriously

challenged unless they held at least Palestine and Damascus, but preferably the whole of Syria. Syria would then provide the buffer between Egypt and the invading forces.<sup>2</sup> For Byzantium, control of northern Syria was vital for the maintaining of their firm hold over Antioch and other territories that they had wrested from Muslim lands in the 350s/960s.<sup>3</sup> The Fāṭimids were also motivated by economic considerations. For them control over Syria meant that in times of bad harvests in Egypt, due to the low flooding of the Nile, Syria would be an important source of food supplies. Commercially, too, control of Syria would prove very lucrative for both powers as its various cities were great centres of trade.

On the ideological front, the Fāṭimids sought justification for their rule by reiterating their intention of waging a jihād against their aggressive Christian neighbour. One of the reasons the Fāṭimids offered for toppling the Ikhshīdīd régime in Egypt was that the latter were not interested or capable of waging a jihād against Byzantium.<sup>4</sup> Later, they used the same argument for attacking the Ḥamdānīd territories in northern Syria. The latter had by now become too weak to ward off Byzantine attacks. Consequently, one of their mawlās named Qarghuwaih, had, much against their will, forged an alliance with Byzantium in Ṣafar 359/December 969-January 970.<sup>5</sup> Fāṭimid control of al-Shām would thus give them the opportunity and prestige of defending Islam against Byzantine aggression. In fact, it would place the Byzantines on the defensive rather than being the aggressors, as



had been the case at the time.

Fāṭimid preoccupation with waging a jihād against Byzantium was not just a propaganda tactic employed by the Fāṭimids to win the populace over to their cause. It actually reflected the gravity with which the Muslims of the time viewed the Byzantine offensive into territories that had been a contended part of the dār al-Islām for at least two centuries.<sup>6</sup>

## II Struggle over al-Shām

### i. Prelude

The fall of the great city of Antioch to Byzantium in 358/969 stirred up strong Muslim reactions against them. The Fāṭimids responded to this challenge by sending an army to retrieve Antioch in 359/970. This force was supported by many local fighting contingents from Syria and Palestine. After laying siege to the city for five months, the Fāṭimid army was forced to withdraw as their interests at Damascus were seriously challenged by local elements within the city as well as by the Qarmatians. For the next few years the Fāṭimids had their hands too full in dealing with the Qarmatians and other elements in Syria to conduct any further campaigns against Byzantine possessions in northern Syria.

The Fāṭimid threat to Antioch did not go unnoticed in Byzantium.

As soon as the new Byzantine Emperor John Tzimiskes (358-366/969-976) had pacified the Armenian-Georgian and Mesopotamian borders of his empire, he turned his attention to Syria. In the summer of 363/974 Tzimiskes amassed a large, impressive army at Antioch.<sup>7</sup> The Byzantine army conducted forays into territories that lay between Antioch and Tripoli - which was in Fāṭimid hands. At about the same time Tzimiskes also sent an embassy to the Fāṭimid court to seek an armistice. Unfortunately, the terms of negotiation are unknown and all we are told is that the Byzantine envoy died in Egypt in Dhu-l-Qaʿda 363/August 974.<sup>8</sup> It may well have been that the Byzantines had sought some sort of an agreement with the Fāṭimids concerning control over Syria. However, nothing constructive appears to have come out of these negotiations and the Fāṭimids, in response to the Byzantine military build-up at Antioch, dispatched a large army towards Syria.<sup>9</sup>

In the spring of the following year, that is 364/975, Tzimiskes undertook an extensive expedition into Syria. He subjugated either by military might or persuasion, most of the major towns of Syria including Ḥimṣ, Baʿlabakk and Damascus. His entry into Palestine, however, was stubbornly resisted by Fāṭimid troops.<sup>10</sup> He thus began his return journey to Antioch via the coastal route, taking Beirut and Byblos. He then set out for Fāṭimid-held Tripoli. Despite engaging in some savage battles, the town did not surrender as it had been thoroughly fortified by the Fāṭimids. The successful defence of Tripoli by Fāṭimid troops was

significant from the Fāṭimid point of view. It demonstrated that even at this relatively early stage of their activities in Syria the Fāṭimids were determined to maintain their hold over Tripoli. Later events were to show that the Fāṭimids used Tripoli as a base from which they attempted to maintain their authority in Syria as well as use it as a springboard from which to challenge the Byzantines in northern Syria. The Byzantine Emperor thus retraced his steps to Antioch, annexing some fortresses on the way. Soon after, in Rabi<sup>c</sup> II 365/January 976, he died at Constantinople.

By his campaign into Syria, Tzimisce succeeded in making a very clear statement that Byzantium was capable and willing to protect its interests in northern Syria, by use of force if necessary.<sup>11</sup> In all the places where he had gained the upper hand, Tzimisce was satisfied that their rulers should pay nominal allegiance to Byzantium. He thus seems to have aimed at creating a buffer zone between Byzantine-held areas of northern Syria and the Fāṭimids, by creating a string of independent Muslim principalities.

Byzantine aggression in what the Fāṭimids perceived as their domain in Syria was viewed with serious concern by them. The fact that only the arrival of a Byzantine envoy to the Fāṭimid court after Tzimisce's return to Constantinople is recorded, without any indication of the message from the Byzantine emperor, nor the Fāṭimid response to it, suggests a breakdown of negotiations between the two powers.<sup>12</sup> Ibn Zulāq, a notable contemporary historian, states in the obituary notice of the Fāṭimid Caliph at

the time, al-Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>izz lidīn Allāh (341-365/953-75), that he intended to wage a jihād against Byzantium.<sup>13</sup> However, shortly after the Byzantine incursion into Syria, al-Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>izz passed away.

## II ii The first decade 365-375/975-985

The next Fāṭimid ruler, al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz billāh (365-396/975-996), and his Byzantine counterpart, Basil II (365-415-6/976-1025), came to power within a year of each other. As can be envisaged, in the initial years of their rule, both these potentates were too involved with their internal affairs to pursue an active foreign policy against each other. For the first three years of Basil II's reign (365-368/976-979), his authority was resolutely undermined by the revolt of Bardas Skleros - a contender to the Byzantine throne. His defeat in 368/979 and his subsequent escape to the Būyids gave Basil II a brief respite.<sup>14</sup>

Ironically, the very general who crushed the rebellion of Bardas Skleros, called Bardas Phocas, then proclaimed himself emperor in 376/987. So serious was his sedition that it could only be curbed with assistance from Basil II's Russian allies in 379/989.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, for almost a decade after he became the emperor, real power lay in the hands of his great uncle Basil, the Parakoimomenos. It was only after the deposition of the latter in 375/985 that Basil II took over the reins of government himself.<sup>16</sup>

On the Fāṭimid side al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz was in total and undisputed command



in Egypt. However, in the early years of his caliphate he had to deploy considerable military and monetary resources to pacify and subjugate southern Syria and Palestine.<sup>17</sup> This should not be interpreted to mean that there was a total lack of hostilities between these two powers from the very onset of the reigns of al-ʿAzīz and Basil II.

## II iii Frontier skirmishes between Fāṭimid and Byzantine Forces

Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Anṭakī, an invaluable source on Fāṭimid-Byzantine diplomacy,<sup>18</sup> records a highly profitable raid on Fāṭimid-held Tripoli authorized by the Byzantine Emperor and executed by his governor at Antioch, Michael Burtzes, in the very year of Basil II's accession. He adds that upon Burtzes' return, preparations got under way for the next foray against Tripoli.<sup>19</sup>

Al-Anṭakī reports another Byzantine raid on Tripoli in 370/980-1. It was viewed as a great success by Byzantium for a large number of the town's inhabitants and the Maghāribā<sup>20</sup> were either taken captive or massacred. Byzantium also gained a great deal of booty. Consequently, the person who had led the razzia, Kurmūk, was appointed governor of al-Lādhaqīya. In response to the Byzantine raid on Tripoli, the Fāṭimids sent one of their commanders called al-Sanhājī to raid the environs of Antioch. The same Kurmūk launched a bold night attack against the raiding party and routed it completely.

The Fāṭimids retaliated in that very year by dispatching Nazzāl and Ibn Shākir from Tripoli to al-Lādhaqīya where they besieged its fortress. Once again Kurmūk set out to ward them off but this time the tables were turned on him. He was arrested by Fāṭimid troops, sent to Cairo and eventually executed.<sup>21</sup>

The next recorded instance of Fāṭimid-Byzantine confrontation occurs five years later when in 375/985-6, Fāṭimid forces besieged Bulunyās, a coastal fortress south of al-Lādhaqīya. This was a particularly troublesome period for Basil II as he was in the process of ridding himself of the power of his great uncle Basil the parakoimomenos. As a result, although the Byzantine governor at Antioch, Leo Melissenos, set out to meet the invaders at Bulunyās and besieged it, a revolt in his army in favour of Basil the parakoimomenos, made him retreat. Basil II was infuriated at that and immediately took steps to recover Bulunyās. A Byzantine force under Leo laid another siege to Bulunyās. Its Fāṭimid occupants sought and were granted amān. They then returned to Tripoli.<sup>22</sup>

Thus the first decade of al-ʿAzīz and Basil II's reigns witnessed limited confrontation between the two powers. Their range of military activities was confined mainly to sending raiding parties by land and sea into each other's frontier territories.

However, just when Basil II must have breathed a sign of relief at having checked Fāṭimid expansion into his domains as well as

having successfully wrested power from Basil the parakoimomenos, further trouble was brewing for him. In 376/986-7 the Būyids released Bardas Skleros from captivity for a couple of reasons.<sup>23</sup> The first was that Skleros had not proved to be as good a bait for wresting concessions from Byzantium as the Būyids had envisaged. Secondly, by releasing Skleros the Būyids were hoping to get their own back on Basil II, for Skleros had every intention of continuing his revolt against the Byzantine Emperor.

To add fuel to the fire, as mentioned earlier, Bardas Phocas shook the very foundation of Basil II's authority by declaring himself the new Byzantine emperor. His revolt assumed threatening proportions as he managed to secure the support of Bardas Skleros as well. As a result, they rebelled jointly. At the same time, on the military front, Basil II's forces met with severe reverses in Bulgaria.<sup>24</sup> All these factors contributed to Basil II's sending an embassy to the Fāṭimid court to seek a peace treaty.

### III Fāṭimid-Byzantine Accord

Under the year 377/987 the Egyptian historian Abu'l-Maḥāsin Ibn Taghrī Birdī<sup>25</sup> records the arrival of a Byzantine embassy to al-ʿAzīz. The Byzantine delegation came by sea to the coast of Palestine and then travelled to Cairo by land. It can be inferred quite clearly from the stipulations of the settlement between the two parties that the Byzantines had come to seek a truce. The

main conditions of the treaty were that:

1. Byzantium was to release all Muslim prisoners held by them.
2. Every Friday the khutba in the jāmi' mosque of Constantinople was to be pronounced in al-ʿAzīz's name.
3. Byzantium guaranteed to supply any provisions that al-ʿAzīz sought.
4. The agreement was valid for a period of seven years.

The above terms of settlement and the year in which the pact was made are corroborated by no less a Byzantine source than the deeds of the imperial archives of the Byzantine empire.<sup>26</sup> The first clause of the agreement that it mentions, however, is additional to those cited above. According to this version, al-ʿAzīz would, perhaps, restore the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem. The wording of the clause and its omission in Fāṭimid sources suggests that this is what Byzantium may have wished but not necessarily something that al-ʿAzīz had agreed to. Moreover, by making the repair of the church the very first item of the accord, the Byzantine scribe may have tried to sweeten the pill of having had to make concessions to the Fāṭimids in return for peace.

For the Fāṭimids, an agreement with Byzantium, made on their own terms, meant an extra feather in their cap. Commercially, they benefited considerably, for through this truce al-ʿAzīz managed to lift the economic sanctions that the Byzantine Emperor John Tzimisce had imposed in 360-1/971. According to this decree Venetian merchants were forbidden to carry essential maritime



supplies such as iron, arms and timber to Fāṭimid lands; items which Egypt did not locally produce in abundance and which, consequently, the Fāṭimids needed to import from abroad. Although the actual commodities are not mentioned in the truce of 377/987, as Faraj has pointed out, it is very likely that it was the above items that were alluded to here.<sup>27</sup> Availability of these commodities would also give impetus to build more ships, strengthening Fāṭimid naval power, as a result.

As far as the khutba was concerned, it had always been pronounced in the reigning ʿAbbāsid Caliph's name. This treaty changed that. It recognized the primacy of al-ʿAzīz over his ʿAbbāsid counterpart at Constantinople - a considerable propaganda victory for the Fāṭimids.

As the Fāṭimids claimed to have a greater ability than their ʿAbbāsid counterparts to wage jihād against Byzantium, Forsyth justifiably questions their motives for concluding a truce with the Byzantines - especially when civil war rendered their territories vulnerable.<sup>28</sup> He explains that perhaps al-ʿAzīz's action was a counter-measure to the alliance which the Būyids had made with Bardas Skleros.

Above all [he says,] the Fāṭimid Caliph did not want to see an Emperor, whose primary loyalty was to Baghdad, ruling at Constantinople .

Another possible factor that must have influenced al-ʿAzīz's decision, concerns Fāṭimid activities in southern Syria. As yet, Fāṭimid forces had achieved limited success in that region.

Consequently, al-ʿAzīz may have viewed a temporary ceasefire with Byzantium in a favourable light, for it would give him the opportunity to consolidate his authority in southern Syria without the apprehension of Byzantine attacks on his territories further north. Moreover, as is well known, Yaʿqūb b. Killis, al-ʿAzīz's esteemed vizier, played a prominent role in influencing state policy. It is clearly evident from the deathbed counsel he gave his master in 380/991-2, that he was in favour of maintaining peaceful relations with Byzantium. Accordingly, he advised al-ʿAzīz to keep peace with them as long as they kept it.<sup>29</sup>

Both Lev and Kennedy have pointed out that Ibn Killis was influenced in his policies over al-Shām by the Ikhshīdīd model.<sup>30</sup> This meant making Damascus a power base and letting the Ḥamdānids rule independently in northern Syria. Accordingly, Ibn Killis further advised al-ʿAzīz to be satisfied with the Ḥamdānids so long as they paid nominal allegiance to him.<sup>31</sup>

Al-ʿAzīz, on the other hand, was eager to pursue a more expansionist policy in Syria. He opted for the Ṭulūnīd approach, according to which it was essential to bring Palestine and all of Syria as far as the Byzantine frontier, under Fāṭimid control.<sup>32</sup> Soon after Ibn Killis' death, al-ʿAzīz escalated his military manoeuvres in northern Syria. He took every opportunity to increase Fāṭimid influence there. Inevitably, that led to Fāṭimid-Byzantine confrontation - especially when al-ʿAzīz tried to retrieve the strategically located city of Aleppo from the

Byzantine sphere of influence.

#### IV Aleppo - the Coveted City

The second most important city in Syria, after Damascus, was Aleppo. For the first decade and a half of al-ʿAzīz's rule, Aleppo was governed by the Ḥamdānid Abu'l-Maʿālī Saʿd al-Dawla (356-381/967-991). It was his policy to try to operate as independently as possible. However, Saʿd al-Dawla had few resources at hand and his territories were coveted by far more powerful neighbours such as the Fāṭimids, Byzantium and even the Būyids; the latter particularly during the reign of ʿAḍud al-Dawla at Baghdad. Saʿd al-Dawla's best bet, therefore, was to play off one power against the other in order to attain his own ambitions.

One of the ways in which Saʿd al-Dawla sought to maintain his autonomy was by continuing the pact with Byzantium. According to this pact, the latter would protect his territories from any foreign aggression. In return Saʿd had to pay them an annual tribute. Simultaneously, Saʿd had the khutba pronounced and coins minted in his territories in either the Fāṭimid or Būyid name, depending on which of the two powers exercised more influence in the area at the time. As can be expected, whenever Ḥamdānid territories were not threatened by the Fāṭimids and in times of Byzantine weakness, Saʿd refrained from paying tribute to

Byzantium.<sup>33</sup>

Fāṭimid interest in Aleppo stemmed from the crucial geographical position that the city occupied at the time. Ibn al-Qalānisi (470-555/1077-1160) sums up the location of Aleppo aptly, from the Fāṭimid point of view, when he reports in the words of Bakjūr<sup>34</sup> - a Ḥamdānid renegade - that,

Aleppo is the doorway to Iraq. Whosoever conquers it, the lands that lie beyond it are his too.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, if the Fāṭimids were to achieve their political and ideological ambitions of advancing eastwards, conquest of Aleppo was of the utmost importance. Commercially, Aleppo was a prosperous city that lay on the crossroads of the caravan route that linked the Mediterranean lands to those of the East.<sup>36</sup>

Unlike the Fāṭimid al-ʿAzīz, his Byzantine counterpart had no ambitions to annex Aleppo directly to its own lands. Consequently when Basil II was advised by his brother Constantine to take over Aleppo and make it a part of Byzantine territories, he rejected the suggestion.<sup>37</sup> He rightly felt that it would serve the interests of his state better to maintain Aleppo as buffer between Byzantine lands in northern Syria, and those of the Muslim world.

Byzantine policy towards Aleppo was influenced by two major considerations - security and commerce. They felt that Aleppo was the gateway to Antioch. Therefore loss of Aleppo would mean a step towards the loss of Antioch and other Byzantine territories



in Asia Minor. Moreover, by maintaining some influence over Aleppo, Byzantium could also take advantage of the flourishing trade there. Furthermore, Aleppo would also act as a barrier that would check Bedouin raids into Byzantine territories. Understandably, it suited Byzantine interests to have a small, weak and semi-independent state in Aleppo which relied on their succour. Its rulers therefore stubbornly resisted any attempts the Fāṭimids or, for that matter, the Būyids made to win Aleppo over.<sup>38</sup>

#### IV i The Fāṭimid-Byzantine Confrontation over Aleppo.

The seeds of Fāṭimid-Byzantine discord over Aleppo were sown when the Fāṭimids supported Bakjūr in Rabīʿ II 373/ September 983 in his attempts to take over the city from Saʿd al-Dawla.<sup>39</sup> Ironically, Byzantium came to the rescue of the very same Saʿd al-Dawla - now the ruler of Aleppo - whose right to rule over the city it had denied him in 359/969-70. It had done so by signing a treaty with Qarghūwaih, Saif al-Dawla's hājib. Qarghūwaih had seized power when Saif al-Dawla, Saʿd's father, died. According to the treaty, Byzantium recognised Qarghūwaih only as the sole ruler of Aleppo, with Bakjūr, his ghulām, as his successor. Bakjūr wrested authority from Qarghūwaih and reinstated Saʿd over Aleppo. As compensation, Saʿd granted Bakjūr the governorship of Ḥimṣ.<sup>40</sup>

The arrival of a Byzantine army at the gates of the city compelled

Bakjūr to raise the siege of Aleppo and to withdraw even from Ḥimṣ, which now became a part of Saʿd's domain. Bakjūr was then successful in getting himself appointed as the Fāṭimid governor at Damascus in Rajab 373/December 983-January 984.<sup>41</sup> Hostilities between him and Saʿd ceased for a while, especially since in 376/986 Saʿd once again recognised Fāṭimid sovereignty over his territories, as opposed to paying allegiance to the now considerably weakened Būyids.<sup>42</sup>

Bakjūr's governorship of Damascus led to a clash of policies between al-ʿAzīz and his vizier Yaʿqūb b. Killis. Eventually, in Rajab 378/October 988 Ibn Killis managed to oust Bakjūr from his governorship.<sup>43</sup> Bakjūr once again enticed al-ʿAzīz with the prospect of conquering Aleppo and sought military aid from him. Although al-ʿAzīz agreed to support him and so ordered his governor at Tripoli, Nazzāl, to assist Bakjūr, the Fāṭimid vizier at the time, ʿĪsā b. Nestorius, thought otherwise. He thus told Nazzāl, his confidant, to delay his march as long as possible. In the meantime, Bakjūr besieged Aleppo with as much support as he could muster. This time, with Byzantine enforcements at hand, Saʿd inflicted a severe defeat on Bakjūr at Nāʿūra, to the east of Aleppo, in 381/991. As was to be expected, Bakjūr was captured and promptly executed.<sup>44</sup>

Contrary to a promise he had made, Saʿd arrested Bakjūr's children and claimed all of Bakjūr's considerable wealth for himself. Bakjūr's children appealed to al-ʿAzīz. The latter communicated

his disapproval to Saʿd.<sup>45</sup> Saʿd is then reported, in some sources, to have threatened to advance against Fāṭimid possessions in Syria and Palestine.<sup>46</sup> However, the mounting tension between the Fāṭimids and the Ḥamdānids was defused soon after, due to the demise of Saʿd al-Dawla in Ramaḍān 381/December 991-January 992.

Bakjūr's death marked an end of the era when the Fāṭimid quest for Aleppo was pursued by offering assistance to a third party to rebel against the Ḥamdānids. Henceforth, al-ʿAzīz sent his forces to Aleppo with the clear and undisguised motive of seriously challenging Ḥamdānid rule there. The ultimate Fāṭimid objective was to establish its authority over Aleppo. The death of Saʿd al-Dawla and the subsequent weakening of Ḥamdānid authority acted as catalysts for Fāṭimid designs on Aleppo. Consequently, the first step that al-ʿAzīz took after the Ḥamdānid ruler's death was to order one of his Turkish ghilmān Manjūtakīn, who had recently been appointed the governor of Damascus as well, to advance to the Aleppan region.

#### IV ii Fāṭimid Campaigns against Aleppo 382-386/992-996

In Ṣafar 382/April 992 Manjūtakīn received the reinforcements, arms and a substantial sum of money that al-ʿAzīz had sent him from Egypt. Soon after, he left for Aleppo at the head of a strong army.<sup>47</sup> He was accompanied by Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Maghribī, the former kātib of Bakjūr. In addition to having administrative experience, Ibn al-Maghribī also had sound knowledge of the Aleppo

region. He would therefore be most suitable for administering the new territories once they had come under Fāṭimid control.<sup>48</sup>

At Aleppo Abu'l-Faḍā'il Sa'īd al-Dawla had succeeded his father Sa'd al-Dawla. Real power, however, was exercised by his father's chamberlain, Lu'lu'.<sup>49</sup> On hearing of the Fāṭimid advance into northern Syria, they at once sought Byzantine protection. They wrote to Basil II who was campaigning in Bulgaria at the time. Basil advised his governor at Antioch, Michael Burtzes, to assist the Ḥamdānids.<sup>50</sup> In the meantime in Rabī' II 382/June-July 992 Fāṭimid troops defeated a Ḥamdānid force in a skirmish near Apamea. In the same month they succeeded in conquering the Ḥamdānid territories of Ḥimṣ, Ḥamāt and Shaizar. They then advanced to Aleppo, entered the town from the Bāb al-Yahūd and besieged it.<sup>51</sup>

Sa'īd al-Dawla attempted to have the siege raised by promising to give allegiance to the Fāṭimid al-ʿAzīz together with proclaiming his name in the khutba, on the coins and on all the banners in his lands. In addition he offered Manjūtakīn a substantial sum of money, but to no avail.<sup>52</sup> The Fāṭimid siege of Aleppo continued for thirty-three days. Then developments in Byzantine lands necessitated Manjūtakīn appointing lieutenants to continue the siege whilst he marched against some neighbouring Byzantine territories.

Prior to setting off from Damascus, Manjūtakīn had sent an envoy



to the Byzantine governor at Antioch to assure him that the Fāṭimid army had no intentions of marching against any of the Byzantine territories in northern Syria, but were only concerned with the Ḥamdānid possessions. Accordingly, neither he nor any of his subordinates would intrude on Byzantine principalities. Burtzes, the Byzantine governor, ill-treated the envoy, however, and had him imprisoned. When Basil II heard of the misdemeanour of his governor, he is reported to have been rather displeased. He ordered the release of the envoy, treated him well and sent him back with a polite but firm message that Byzantium would not tolerate a Fāṭimid takeover of Aleppo.<sup>53</sup>

Either in retaliation against the maltreatment meted out to his envoy by the Byzantine governor, or in response to Byzantine preparations to assist the Ḥamdānids, or because of a combination of these two factors, Manjūtakīn left Aleppo and attacked some Byzantine territories that were adjacent to it. In the meantime Burtzes advanced to meet the Fāṭimid general.

The two armies met at Jisr al-Ḥadīd. Although the Byzantine force was larger than the Fāṭimid one, the latter scored a victory. So pleased was al-ʿAzīz that he personally read out the communiqué announcing Fāṭimid success. Manjūtakīn took a large number of Byzantine soldiers captive and also gained a great deal of booty.<sup>54</sup> Manjūtakīn then pressed forward towards Antioch. On the way he overwhelmed the Byzantine-held fortress of ʿImm where he again took a vast amount of booty and prisoners. He then advanced

further into Byzantine lands until he reached the vicinity of Antioch. According to Yaḥyā, the numerical superiority of Manjūtakīn's army dissuaded Burtzes from opposing him at the gates of Antioch. The Fāṭimid general then pillaged and plundered the enemy territories. Consequently, laden with booty and prisoners, Manjūtakīn retraced his steps to Aleppo via Marʿash after fighting in Byzantine lands for just over a year.<sup>55</sup>

The Fāṭimid siege of Aleppo continued until the end of 382/992 when Manjūtakīn withdrew with his entire force to winter in Damascus. The Fāṭimid general felt the need to lift the siege in the winter primarily because it was extremely difficult to supply a substantial armed force such as his with provisions over vast stretches of land.<sup>56</sup> This problem was aggravated by the Ḥamdānids removing as much grain as possible from the vicinity of Aleppo and burning the rest, causing shortages of food supply in Fāṭimid ranks.<sup>57</sup>

The Fāṭimids appear to have spent the following year consolidating territories they had conquered in their previous campaigns and in reorganising their forces. Consequently, they did not undertake any major military operations in northern Syria at this time.<sup>58</sup> There were, however, some significant naval encounters between the Fāṭimids and Byzantium in 383/993, with Byzantium taking the offensive. From al-Maqrīzī's report it appears that Byzantium launched a couple of attacks against Alexandria in 383/993. In the first instance, the two powers engaged in naval warfare in the

environs of Alexandria. The outcome of this encounter was probably in favour of the Fāṭimids for they took seventy Byzantine soldiers captive. Al-Maqrīzī does not mention any Fāṭimid losses.

In the second Byzantine appearance at Alexandria the Fāṭimids adopted a two-pronged strategy. They consolidated the city by sending some of their armed forces there, and so preparing themselves to repulse any intended Byzantine onslaught on land. Simultaneously, the Fāṭimid navy set sail against the invaders. The Fāṭimid fleet successfully chased the Byzantines from Egyptian waters and compelled them to retreat to the Syrian coast without any actual fighting taking place between the two forces. At this time eighteen ships laden with weapons and warriors were added to the Fāṭimid fleet to strengthen it further.<sup>59</sup>

If a motive for Byzantine aggression need be sought, it could be either to hamper Fāṭimid preparations in central Syria by stopping their supplies from reaching their base at Tripoli, or alternatively to sound a warning to the Fāṭimids that Byzantium would retaliate against attacks on their territories by striking back effectively on Fāṭimid lands.

The spring of 384/994 witnessed Fāṭimid determination to besiege Aleppo once again. Consequently, Manjūtakīn set out from Damascus in Rabīʿ I 394/April-May 994.<sup>60</sup> Once he arrived at Apamea, he headed for Antioch, ravaging and plundering the villages that lay in its vicinity. He then returned to Apamea and from there moved

southwards along the coast to Jabāla. It is most likely that the recent arrival at Antioch of a Byzantine general, Leo Mellisenos, at the head of a large army, may have proved to be a deterrent to any further offensives that the Fāṭimid general may have planned to undertake in the area.

Manjūtakīn left for Aleppo and by the summer of 384/994 the Fāṭimid army had once again laid siege to Aleppo. Manjūtakīn was compelled to relax the siege in Shaʿbān 384/September 994 when it came to his attention that a joint Byzantine force under Michael Burtzes and Leo Mellisenos had advanced as far as Apamea in order to help the Ḥamdānids against the besiegers.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, Manjūtakīn withdrew temporarily from Aleppo to meet the Byzantine force.

Finally, the Byzantine and Fāṭimid armies advanced until they drew up along the western and eastern banks of the Orontes respectively. Inevitably, one of the two sides had to cross the river in order to engage the enemy. It was the Dailamī contingent of the Fāṭimid army that took the plunge on 6 Shaʿbān/15 September. The rest of the Fāṭimid force followed suit and launched a fierce attack on the Byzantine side. This battle proved to be the most decisive one between the two forces. The Byzantines were outnumbered and demoralised. Consequently, they were completely routed. Both Burtzes and Mellisenos were compelled to retreat to Antioch having lost as many as five thousand of their men in battle.<sup>62</sup> In the meantime Manjūtakīn marched



triumphantly to Aleppo and renewed the siege. .

As can be anticipated, the news of Fāṭimid victory in Syria was received and celebrated in Cairo with great jubilation. When some two hundred and fifty Byzantine prisoners of war including eight patriarchs and eighteen men from the Banū Ḥamdān eventually arrived in the Fāṭimid capital in Dhu'l-Qa<sup>ʿ</sup>da 384/December 994, they were paraded before the Fāṭimid Caliph al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz and his young son, al-Manṣūr. Al-Maqrīzī depicts the day this event took place as "a great day".<sup>63</sup>

Fāṭimid success on land appears to have been matched by its navy's performance at sea against Byzantium. Al-Maqrīzī reports that in Jumādā I 384/June-July 994, a Fāṭimid naval expedition returned to Cairo with a hundred prisoners of war. He adds that both Fuṣṭāṭ and Cairo were decorated most beautifully on that occasion and that al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Azīz and his son rode through the streets of the capital and then went to al-Maqs by boat before returning to their palace. He then adds the cliché, "It was a great day; Egypt had not witnessed its like before".<sup>64</sup>

In the meantime the Fāṭimid siege of Aleppo continued through the rest of 384/994. Contrary to the usual practice of the Fāṭimid army wintering in Damascus, Manjūtakīn set up permanent camp for his troops outside the city walls, complete with markets, baths, hostelries and fortifications.<sup>65</sup> As can be expected, the long, drawn-out siege had grave consequences for the local populace.

Shortage of food led to famine and plague followed in its wake.

#### V Basil II's Campaign in Syria in 385/995

Aleppo was finally on the verge of a Fāṭimid takeover when the Ḥamdānid ruler Abu'l-Faḍā'il and his chamberlain Lu'lu's pleas for assistance to the Byzantine Emperor made the latter realise the gravity of the situation. Hitherto, whenever the Ḥamdānids had sought Basil II's help in combatting Fāṭimid attacks, the Byzantine Emperor had usually instructed his governor at Antioch to aid the Ḥamdānids. In response to Ḥamdānid appeals in 384/994 Basil II had ordered his general Leo Melissenos to join forces with Burtzes in order to strengthen his forces. But as the Fāṭimid-Byzantine confrontation of 384/994 had revealed, even a joint Byzantine force did not prove an equal match to Manjūtakīn's army. Moreover, in their appeal the Ḥamdānids managed to impress on Basil II that once Aleppo fell to the Fāṭimids, Antioch was to be their next objective.<sup>66</sup> Their envoy further added that,

If you were to deal with this matter personally, not a single Maghribī army would be able to oppose you. Thus Aleppo would be saved and Antioch and its environs protected. If you hesitate, they will take possession of all that.<sup>67</sup>

Realising that the situation in northern Syria was critical from the Byzantine point of view, Basil II interrupted his successful campaign in Bulgaria. He set out in earnest for Aleppo, covering a distance of three hundred parasangs and crossing the whole of Asia Minor in less than two and a half weeks.<sup>68</sup> The Byzantine

Emperor sought to take the Fāṭimid general by surprise. Consequently, he took stringent measures to keep his march a secret. Manjūtakīn's agents, however, intercepted the Byzantine envoys who were on their way to deliver a message to the Ḥamdānids of the imminent arrival of the Byzantine ruler at Aleppo.

At once Manjūtakīn made preparations to withdraw. He gave orders that all installations and fortifications that had formerly been erected by the Fāṭimids around Aleppo should be burnt or destroyed. On the last day of Rabīʿ I 385/3 May 995, after a continuous siege of seven months, the Fāṭimid army began a precipitate retreat towards Damascus.<sup>69</sup>

Basil II appeared at the gates of Aleppo just two days after the Fāṭimid withdrawal. The Ḥamdānid ruler and his chamberlain received the Emperor, tendered their allegiance to him and thanked him for repulsing the Fāṭimid onslaught.<sup>70</sup> After a very brief stay at Aleppo, Basil II set out southwards along the Orontes. He sacked Apamea and defeated part of Manjūtakīn's army that had been stationed there, in one day.<sup>71</sup> At Shaizar the Emperor overwhelmed the Fāṭimid general Maṣṣūr b. Karādīs, who subsequently professed loyalty to Byzantium.<sup>72</sup> The Emperor then proceeded to sack Ḥims and Rafānīya, pillaging and plundering as well as taking many captives.<sup>73</sup> Thereafter Basil II turned towards the coast and laid siege to Tripoli.

## VI Tripoli - a Fāṭimid Stronghold and Naval Base

The Byzantine Emperor's motives concerning Tripoli were quite different from his policies concerning northern Syria. As the latter had formed part of the Ḥamdānid territories in the past, and so constituted the land of Byzantine-Ḥamdānid truce, the Emperor sought to merely expel the Fāṭimids from these territories. He did not, however, attempt to place these lands under Byzantine occupation. When Basil II laid siege to Tripoli, on the other hand, he had every intention of conquering that city and placing it under direct Byzantine control. He had good reasons to do so for Tripoli was the main Fāṭimid stronghold on the Syrian coast and the principal base of their fleet in Syria. Because of its strategic location, Tripoli served as the most suitable place from which Fāṭimid offensives in northern Syria, particularly against Aleppo, could be undertaken.<sup>74</sup>

Moreover, at the port of Tripoli the Fāṭimid navy could bring essential supplies from Egypt for its forces in Syria. Thus when Manjūtakīn was waging war in northern Syria, Ibn al-Qalānisi reports that al-ʿAzīz sent him one hundred thousand bags of grain via Tripoli.<sup>75</sup> In addition, from the Byzantine point of view, maintenance of a well-fortified port such as that of Tripoli would prove neither cumbersome nor costly as would the maintenance of some of the localities in the interior of Syria.

Despite Basil II's great show of strength, the siege of Tripoli



dragged on for forty days with success nowhere in sight. In an effort to bring Tripoli into the Byzantine sphere of influence, the Emperor promised to treat its inhabitants favourably if they agreed to a pact with Byzantium. This agreement would place Tripoli in a similar category to Aleppo and would give its hitherto Fāṭimid governor, Muḏahhar b. Nazzāl, an opportunity to become an independent ruler. When Ibn Nazzāl had gone out of the city's gates to communicate his approval to Basil II's proposals, the inhabitants of the city shut the gates on him and refused him entry.

The main opponent to the scheme which had been suggested by Basil II was an influential qādī called ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Wahīd b. Ḥaidara. He had thus galvanised resistance within Tripoli. A brother of al-Muḏahhar then succeeded the latter as the governor of Tripoli. In the meantime, the stubborn resistance of the Tripolitaniāns compelled Basil II to lift the drawn-out siege of the city. Al-Muḏahhar had little choice but to leave Tripoli. He therefore decided to accompany the Emperor.<sup>76</sup>

Basil II's determination to challenge the Fāṭimid base at Tripoli led him next to the coastal town of Anṭarṭus, located some fifty-nine kilometres north of Tripoli. Here the Emperor rebuilt a ruined coastal fortress and garrisoned the place with a four thousand-strong force.<sup>77</sup> He then retraced his steps to Antioch, where he dismissed Michael Burtzes and appointed in his place Damian Dalassenos as the new governor.<sup>78</sup> Basil II then returned

to Constantinople.

## VII Fāṭimid Response - Massive War Preparations

As soon as the news of Manjūtakīn's unexpected retreat reached the Fāṭimid capital, al-ʿAzīz proclaimed a jihād against the Byzantine empire. A decree was issued in Fustāṭ and Cairo urging all able-bodied men to fight for this noble cause which the Caliph was going to command in person. Thousands of civilians enlisted to offer battle to Byzantium, in response to this call.<sup>79</sup> Al-Maqrīzī gives a lengthy account of the preparations that took several months. He even mentions details such as the number of horses and other beasts purchased, naming the amounts of money that al-ʿAzīz sent his various commanders, etc.

To highlight the scale of the planned operation it suffices to point out that Manjūtakīn alone received one hundred and fifty thousand dinars at this time. On 10 Rajab 385/2 August 995 al-ʿAzīz mobilized his entire army to Muniat al-Asbagh, situated to the east of Cairo. He also sent a large force to Syria under the Fāṭimid commander, Jaish b. al-Ṣamṣāma.<sup>80</sup>

Soon after Basil II's return to Constantinople he sent an embassy to the Fāṭimid court seeking a renewal of the Byzantine-Fāṭimid accord and apologising for his invasion into Syria. A Ḥamdānid envoy also presented himself at Cairo seeking forgiveness and

requesting the Fāṭimid Caliph to confirm him in his post. Al-ʿAzīz seems to have joined in the charade by agreeing to these requests.<sup>81</sup> Meanwhile, preparations for a Fāṭimid campaign into Syria continued unabated.

Accordingly, soon after the Byzantine Emperor left northern Syria, Manjūtakīn once again set out from Damascus in Shawwāl 385/December 995. This time it was the recently fortified coastal town of Anṭarṭūs that formed the target of his campaign. Although he laid siege to it for a month, he failed to achieve any decisive results. He therefore returned to Damascus.<sup>82</sup> The fact that the Fāṭimid general felt the need to challenge the newly-established Byzantine base at Anṭarṭūs shows that the Fāṭimids viewed it as a serious threat to their interests in Syria, especially their own base at Tripoli.

Despite Basil II's setback in conquering Tripoli, it continued to be the focus of Byzantine aggression. Accordingly, in late 385/995 in the very first year of his term as governor of Tripoli, Damianos Dalassenos led a raid on Tripoli and its environs, taking many captives with him. Three months later he attacked ʿArqa. The following year he undertook another raid on Tripoli and plundered Rafanīya, ʿAuj and al-Lakāma and captured the latter's fortress. Each of these military exploits of the new Byzantine governor were marked by ruin and devastation.<sup>83</sup>

By the spring of 386/996 friction between Cairo and Constantinople had reached unprecedented heights. The Fāṭimid al-ʿAzīz moved his camp on 20 Rabīʿ I 386/12 April 996 from Munā Jaʿfar, where it had been stationed for a while, to Bilbais - the first stop on the route to Palestine.<sup>84</sup> The Fāṭimid ruler intended to conduct a two-pronged campaign to Syria. He personally was to lead his armed forces while his fleet was to set sail to Tripoli. Accordingly, al-ʿAzīz ordered his vizier ʿĪsā b. Nestorius to build and equip a powerful war fleet to offer combat to Byzantine naval forces at sea.<sup>85</sup>

#### VII i The Burning of the Fleet and its aftermath

However, on the very day that the recently constructed ships were to be launched, after the noon prayer on Friday 23 Rabīʿ II 386/15 May 996, fire broke out in the Cairo arsenal, destroying the whole fleet except six ships.<sup>86</sup> The populace of Cairo suspected the Byzantines residing near the arsenal at al-Maqs in Cairo of starting the fire. Al-Maqrīzī states that these Byzantines were prisoners of war, while Yahyā asserts that they were the Italian merchants from Byzantine Amalfi who were actively engaged in commercial activity with Egypt.<sup>87</sup>

The mob and the Maghribī soldiers attacked these Byzantines, killing well over a hundred of them and looted their lodgings which were full of valuables. A couple of churches were also plundered and a bishop was severely injured in the incident. The



Fāṭimid vizier ʿĪsā b. Nestorius and the chief of police, Yānis al-Saqlabī, eventually restored tranquillity. Most of what had been pillaged was restored to its original owners. Of the sixty-three plunderers arrested, one third were executed, the other third were flogged, and the final third were freed, according to a judgement proclaimed by the Fāṭimid ruler.

In the meantime ʿĪsā b. Nestorius was instructed to supervise the construction of a new fleet. As Egypt was short of wood at this time, wood was taken from every conceivable place including the roof beams of the mint at Cairo and a small hospital, and was utilised in the construction of the new fleet. The urgency which the Fāṭimids attached to getting a new fleet ready can be seen in the fact that within a few months six new vessels were launched.<sup>88</sup> The Fāṭimids were soon to put to use their recently strengthened naval force.

Either in retaliation against Byzantine activity at its newly established base at Anṭarṭūs or as a prelude to the grand campaign that the Fāṭimid Caliph was to lead into Syria, Manjūtakīn was instructed to set out from Damascus in the summer of 386/996. After raiding the environs of Antioch and Aleppo he finally approached Anṭarṭūs and besieged it.

Meanwhile a squadron of twenty-four ships equipped with ammunition and supplies set sail from Cairo to attack the Byzantine naval base simultaneously from the sea. A violent storm, however,

destroyed most of the Fāṭimid vessels and the ones that survived the storm were confiscated by the Byzantine forces. A large number of the ships' men were taken captive as well. The timely arrival of Damianos Dalassenos on the scene compelled Manjūtakīn to withdraw without achieving any concrete results.<sup>89</sup> This was the last Fāṭimid-Byzantine encounter in the reign of al-ʿAzīz.

#### VIII The death of al-ʿAzīz

On 28 Ramaḍān 386/14 October 996 the Fāṭimid Caliph succumbed to a disease from which he had been suffering for a couple of months. The sudden and unexpected demise of the Fāṭimid ruler who was in total command of his state and well experienced in the art of warfare and his being replaced by an eleven-year old successor, who at the onset of his reign was at the mercy of the various elements of the Fāṭimid élite, transformed the situation dramatically.

For the next few years rival Fāṭimid generals were too occupied fighting out their own battles for power to pay any attention to Byzantium. Consequently, with the death of al-ʿAzīz

The only full-scale Fāṭimid attack on the Byzantine empire ever planned was permanently postponed.<sup>90</sup>

Al-ʿAzīz's cherished dream of winning over the strategically placed region of northern Syria, particularly Aleppo, thereby taking one more precious step towards the East, could not be

fulfilled in his lifetime. In determining the course of events in northern Syria, Basil II had managed to have the final word, though at a considerable military and monetary expense to Byzantium as well.

#### IX Evaluation of Fāṭimid-Byzantine Relations in al-ʿAzīz's time

From the outset of al-ʿAzīz's reign, the Fāṭimid Caliph seems to have adopted a specific stance on his empire's relations with its Christian neighbour, Byzantium. Fāṭimid diplomacy concerning their most virile rival in Syria, Byzantium, was of necessity affected by their sovereign's policies concerning Syria itself. As has been stated earlier in the chapter, Fāṭimid control of Syria was essential not merely for economic and commercial considerations, but for the security of Egypt, the heart of the Fāṭimid empire. The earnestness and the tenacity with which al-ʿAzīz attempted to establish Fāṭimid dominance in Syria, challenging time and again the Byzantine presence in the north of the country clearly reveals his concern with this issue.

In fact, so determined was the Fāṭimid Caliph to maintain his hegemony in the region that he personally led his armed force in 377/987 against Alptegin who had challenged Fāṭimid authority over Damascus. Nor did al-ʿAzīz seem to have hesitated in taking the same course of action against the Byzantine Emperor, Basil II, in 386/996 when he felt that the latter was threatening Fāṭimid

interests in Syria. By the same token, control of Syria, at least the northern part of it, was viewed as essential by Byzantium for very much the same reasons as the Fāṭimids. Consequently, its rulers made every possible endeavour to maintain a foothold there.

The reigns of al-ʿAzīz and Basil II witnessed a crucial period in Fāṭimid-Byzantine relations. It was during their time that the mode and extent of hostility on the one hand and diplomacy on the other were being tested out by the two medieval powers. This is amply evident in the detailed account of warfare and diplomacy between the Fāṭimids and Byzantium presented in this chapter. It was in the interests of both these powers to come to some sort of a settlement over Syria. Eventually they did so, with Byzantium retaining its hold over northern Syria and the Fāṭimids maintaining control over central and southern Syria. That compromise, however, was reached after the reign of al-ʿAzīz, during the time of his successor, al-Ḥākim.



# FOOTNOTES

1. For a background to Fāṭimid-Byzantine relations while the former were still in North Africa see Heck, "Cairo or Baghdad ...?", 56-60.
2. For a succinct account of the reasons for Fāṭimid involvement in Syria see Heck, op. cit., 194-9.
3. For Byzantine expansion into Muslim lands at this time see A. A. Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire, Vol. I (Madison, 1964), 303-12; G. Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, translated Joan Hussey (Oxford, 1968), 283-98; M. Canard "Byzantium and the Muslim World to the Middle of the 11th Century", CMH, 718-24.
4. Forsyth, "The Byzantine-Arab Chronicle of Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Anṭakī", 5. The letter of amān (peace) that the Fāṭimid commander Jawhār issued to the Egyptians after his take-over of Egypt, clearly mentions the Byzantine menace to Muslim lands and the Fāṭimid intention to challenge them. See al-Maqrīzī, Ittiʿāz, I, 103-6. On jihād see E. Tyan, "Djihād", E.1<sup>2</sup>, II, 538-40. On the issue of jihād against Byzantium see Canard, op. cit., 696-7.
5. For details of the treaty see Canard, Les H'amdānides, 381-8. For an assessment of the terms of the treaty and how it reduced the emirate of Aleppo to a state of vassalage, see Farag, "Byzantium and its Muslim Neighbours", 174-7.
6. H. Kennedy, The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates (London, 1986), 278.
7. Al-Maqrīzī, Ittiʿāz, I, 214.
8. Ibid, 208-9, 214.
9. Ibid, 118.
10. After his return to Constantinople, Tzimisces is supposed to have written a letter to his Armenian vassal, King Ashot III, making out his march into Syria as some sort of a Crusade to retrieve Palestine from Muslim hands. This letter is recorded in the Imperial Archives of the Byzantine Empire and has been translated into German by F. Dölger, Regesten Der Kaiserurkunden des Oströmischen Reiches von 565-1453. First published in Berlin in 1924, reprinted in 1976. This letter was also quoted by Matthew of Edessa. Paul Walker in his article "The "Crusade" of John Tzimisces in the Light of New Arabic Evidence", Byzantion, XLVII (1977), 301-27, discusses the 364-5/974-5 campaign of Tzimisces at length.

11. Ibn al-Qalānīsī, Dhail, (Amedroz ed.), 12-14; al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 368-9; Itti'āz, I, 220-2; Abu'l-Faraj Bar Hebraeus, Chronography, English translation Wallis Budge, Vol. I (London, 1932), 175; Ibn al-Dawādārī, al-Durra, 170-1; A. E. Destourian, "The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa", unpublished PhD thesis, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J, (1972), 23-7.
12. Itti'āz, I, 225. Walker, op. cit., 324, says that the Byzantine embassy was sent to "negotiate some kind of formal end to the hostilities". Walker's (op. cit., 325) contention that Tzimisces' campaign of 365/975 made it "impossible for Egypt to move enough force north to attack Antioch again" may be true of a decade or so, but certainly not so for later times, for by the 380s/990s Fāṭimid forces were ravaging territories in the vicinity of Antioch, posing a serious threat to Byzantine rule there. It took the Byzantine Emperor, Basil II, and a very large Byzantine armed force to reverse this situation in 385/995, as events described later in the chapter show.
13. Itti'āz, I, 231. On Ibn Ḥūlāq see "Ibn Ḥūlāk", E.1<sup>2</sup>, III, 979 and its references. For a good review of Ibn Ḥūlāq's works see Lev, "A political study", 3-7.
14. For details of the revolt see al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 372-5; Ostrogorsky, op. cit., 298-9, 303-4; H. Grégoire, "The Amorians and Macedonians, 824-1025", CNH, 176-181. Matthew of Edessa, op. cit., 38, gives a highly coloured and personalised account of the revolt and has even recorded some false information. Canard, op. cit., 723-4; Al-Rudhrāwarī, Dhail Tajārib, III, 12-15; VI, 4-7.
15. Grégoire, op. cit., 178-9, gives a lucid account of this revolt. Constantine, Basil II's younger brother, had been appointed as a co-Emperor with the latter, but it was Basil who emerged dominant. Matthew of Edessa, op. cit., 44, takes a very negative view on Bardas Phocas and even moulds information on the latter to suit his purpose.
16. On Basil the parakoimomenos see Ostrogorsky, op. cit., 285-303; Grégoire, op. cit., 148-183, especially 174-8 - for his role under Basil II; Canard, op. cit., 723. For the early harmonious relations between Basil II and Basil the parakoimomenos see the 11th century Byzantine writer M. Psellos, Chronographie, ed. F. Renauld (Paris, 1926, 1928), 2 vols., I, 3.; al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 420-6; Ostrogorsky, op. cit.
17. For a detailed account of al-ʿAzīz's policies and activities in southern Syria and Palestine, see his, "A political study", Chapters VII and VIII. See also his "Fāṭimid policy towards Damascus (358/968 - 368/996) - military, political



- and social aspects", Jerusalem studies in Arabic and Islam, II, (1981), 165-83.
18. For a thorough historiographical and historical evaluation of Yaḥyā al-Anṭakī's history see Forsyth, op. cit., vols I and II.
  19. Al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 372.
  20. On the Maghāriba see M. Talbi, E.1<sup>2</sup>, V, 1159-61.
  21. Al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 406-7.
  22. Ibid, 416-17. See Forsyth, op. cit., p. 421 for location of Bulunyās. G. Schlumberger, L'Epopée byzantine à la fin du dixième siècle (Paris, 1896-1905), 3 vols, I, 568, 570-2.
  23. Al-Rudhrāwārī, Dhail Tajārib, III, 111-114, VI, 115-19; for lengthy negotiations that preceded Skleros' release see ibid, VI, 23-35; Forsyth, op. cit., 425-7; Canard, op. cit., 724; Grégoire, op. cit., 178; Farag, op. cit., 125-35 discusses at length the Būyid release of Bardas Skleros.
  24. Grégoire, op. cit., 178; Ostrogorsky, op. cit., 302-3; Farag, op. cit., 125-6.
  25. Al-Nujūm, II, No. 2, p. 40.
  26. Dölger, op. cit., I, 98-9. For further references on this pact Dölger refers the reader to Ibn al-Athīr and al-Ainī as well as some secondary sources.
  27. Farag, op. cit., p. 290, n. 43.
  28. Forsyth, op. cit., 435. There were precedents laid down by earlier Fāṭimid rulers of concluding a truce with Byzantium for a limited period of time. Fāṭimid policy concerning that is clearly outlined in al-Mu'izz's response to a request made by a Byzantine envoy at al-Qairawān, who sought a perpetual truce between the two powers in 346/957-8. Al-Mu'izz is reported to have said; "Religion and Islamic law (Sharī'a) did not admit of a perpetual truce. Allāh had sent his Prophet Muḥammad and set up the Imāms after him from among his descendants in order to call mankind to his religion to make jihād against the recalcitrants till they embraced the religion or "paid the jizya, having been subdued", accepting the sovereignty of the Imām of the Muslims and seeking his protection. Truce was admissible for a fixed time only according to what, in the opinion of the Imām of the Muslims, was convenient for them, and served the interests of their religion. If a permanent truce were agreed upon, the holy war, which was a religious duty for all Believers, would fall into abeyance, the propagation of Islam would cease and the

command of the Qu'rān would be contravened". Cf. S. M. Stern, "An Embassy of the Byzantine Emperor to the Fāṭimid Caliph al-Mu'izz", Byzantion 20 (1950), 245-6. Stern has quoted the above extract from al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's Kitāb al-Majālis wa'l-Musāyarāt. The Arabic text of the above passage is on p. 254 of Stern's article.

29. Ibn Qalānisī, Dhail (Zakkar ed.), p. 56; Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt, Vol. IV, 365.
30. Y. Lev, "The Fāṭimid vizier Ya'qūb b. Killis and the Beginning of the Fāṭimid Administration in Egypt", Der Islam, vol. 58, pt. 2 (1981), 244; Kennedy, op. cit., 320.
31. Ibn Qalānisī, Dhail, 56; Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt, 365.
32. Kennedy, op. cit., 320.
33. Canard, Les Hamdānides, pp. 677-86. Ibn al-ʿAdīm, Ta'rīkh Halab, ed. S. Dahan, Damascus, 1951, vol. I, pp. 169-80; Forsyth, op. cit., 396, 417-23. Farag, op. cit., 189; Heck, op. cit., 206-7.
34. On Bakjūr's activities in Syria see section IV: "The Fāṭimid-Byzantine Confrontation over Aleppo", and n. 39-n. 44.
35. Ta'rīkh Dimashq (Zakkar ed.), 58. Ibn Hauqal, Kitāb Surat al-Ard, a 10th century Arab geographer, describes Aleppo as "the city (that) lies on the high road between Iraq and al-ṭhughūr (fortresses) and the rest of Syria".
36. On the importance of Aleppo at this time see Farag, op. cit., 167-8; Heck, op. cit., 206-11.
37. Ibn al-ʿAdīm, Zubdat al-Halab, I, 191; for Byzantine policy on Aleppo see Farag, op. cit., 176-7.
38. The Būyids were interested in gaining control of Aleppo for very much the same reasons as the Fāṭimids. They saw that conquest of Aleppo was essential for realising their aggressive designs on Fāṭimid and subsequently Byzantine lands. Thus the Būyids were willing to make some important territorial concessions to the Hamdānid Saʿd al-Dawla in return for his "supposed" loyalty. Cf. Miskawaih, Tajārib al-Umam, II, 392, 409; Forsyth, op. cit., 396-7. It was for these very reasons that the sovereignty of Aleppo formed an important Būyid clause of Būyid-Byzantine negotiations over the release of Bardas Skleros. Cf. al-Rudhrāwārī, Dhail Tajārib al-Umam, 33, 39.
39. Ibn Qalānisī, Dhail (Zakkar ed.), 50; Al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 412-3; Ittiʿāz, I, 258; Canard, Les Hamdānides, 683-4.



40. Ibn al-Qalānisī Dhail (Zakkar ed.), 48-49; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, Zubda, I, 176; al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 397-8.
41. Ibn al-Qalānisī, Dhail (Zakkar ed.), 50; Ittiʿāz, I, 258-9; al-Kāmil, VIII, 12-13; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, Zubda, I, 174-6; Canard, Les Ḥamdānides, 684.
42. Ibn al-ʿAdīm, Zubda, I, 178; Canard, "Ḥamdānids", E.1<sup>2</sup>, 130; Canard, Les Ḥamdānides, 686; Forsyth, op. cit., 420.
43. Ibn al-Qalānisī, Dhail (Zakkar ed.), 51-3; Ittiʿāz, I, 260; Ibn al-Dawādārī, al-Durra, 220-4; al-Kāmil, IX, 40; Zubda, I, 178; Canard, Les Ḥamdānides, 686. The issue of Bakjūr's governorship over Damascus caused the only known major rift between al-ʿAzīz and his vizier Ibn Killis. The latter was temporarily imprisoned because of that. Cf. Lev, "The Fāṭimid vizier Yaʿqūb b. Killis", 243.
44. Dhail (Zakkar ed.), 58-64; al-Anṭakī Ta'rīkh, 435. Yaḥyā does not give the reasons for Bakjūr leaving Damascus and makes no mention of proposed Fāṭimid assistance for Bakjūr; Ittiʿāz, I, 269; Ibn al-Dawādārī, al-Durra, 230; al-Kāmil, VIII, 59-61; al-Nujūm, II, 48; Al-Rudhrāwārī, Dhail Tajārib, III, 208-14, VI, 219-26; Canard, Les Ḥamdānides, 687-9; Zubda, I, 178-9.
45. Dhail, (Zakkar ed.), 64-5; al-Kāmil, VIII, 62; al-Rudhrāwārī, Dhail Tajārib, III, 214-6, VI, 226-8; Canard, Les Ḥamdānides, 689-90.
46. Dhail (Zakkar ed.), 38-9; Dhail Tajārib, III, 215-6, VI, 227-8; Canard, Les Ḥamdānides, 690-854. Forsyth, op. cit., 483-4, is of the opinion that Saʿd al-Dawla had only threatened to march against the Fāṭimids as a matter of propaganda and that he could not possibly have seriously contemplated doing so unless he had taken leave of his senses.
47. Ittiʿāz, I, 274-5; Zubda, I, 185-6; Dhail, (Zakkar ed.), 69; al-Kāmil, IX, 62; Dhail Tajārib, III, 217-8, VI, 229-30.
48. Dhail (Zakkar ed.), 69; al-Nujūm, II, 6. After Bakjūr's death Ibn al-Maghribī had sought refuge with al-ʿAzīz, as had many others who had served the Ḥamdānids, after Saʿd al-Dawla's death. Whilst in Egypt Ibn al-Maghribī managed to entice al-ʿAzīz to conquer Aleppo. Dhail (Zakkar ed.), 67; al-Nujūm, II, 5-6; al-Kāmil, IX, 62; Dhail Tajārib, III, 217, VI, 229.
49. Zubda, I, 185.

50. Al-Kāmil IX, 63; al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 438; Dhail (Zakkar ed.), 70; al-Nujūm, II, 7; Dhail Tajārib, III, 217-8, VI, 229-30.
51. Al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 438; Itti'āz, I, 275; Zubda, I, 186.
52. Zubda, I, 186; Itti'āz, I, 175; Al-Maqrīzī says that Sa'īd offered Manjūtakīn a million dirhams, a thousand pieces of silk, and one hundred saddled horses.
53. Al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 438-9; although al-Anṭakī is the only historian who reports this information, as Forsyth, op. cit., has painstakingly shown in his thesis, al-Anṭakī's Ta'rīkh is a very reliable source. Moreover, al-Anṭakī had access to certain sources which the Arab writers did not have at their disposal. In addition, both Manjūtakīn's sending an envoy to the Byzantine governor, as well as Basil II's placating him, makes good sense. It indicates that at least at this stage of the game both parties were unwilling to violate the peace treaty signed between them in 377/987. Cf. also Farag, op. cit., 240.
54. The most reliable sources for Manjūtakīn's campaign of 382/992 are al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 438-9; al-Maqrīzī, Itti'āz, I, 275 and Ibn al-ʿAdīm, Zubda, I, 186-8. All those sources who report from Hilāl al-Šābi', that is, al-Rudhrāwārī, Sibt b. al-Jawzī, Ibn al-Qalānisī and Ibn Taghrī Birdī, confuse events of 384/994 with those of 382/992. Cf. Forsyth, op. cit., 487-8.
55. Zubda, I, 187-8; al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 438-9; Itti'āz, I, 275-6. While al-Anṭakī and al-Maqrīzī state that the siege was lifted in Rajab 382/September 992, Ibn al-ʿAdīm places it at the beginning of 383/993.
56. Both Farag, op. cit., 241-2 and Lev, "A political study", 176, accept Hilāl al-Šābi''s account of Sa'īd al-Dawla and his chamberlain Lu'lu successfully bribing Manjūtakīn's kātib Ibn al-Maghribī with a large sum of money. Consequently he convinced the Fāṭimid general to withdraw from Aleppo. Yet, as Forsyth, op. cit., 489, has pointed out, this story does not appear to be based on facts and is not corroborated by other historians such as al-Maqrīzī and al-Anṭakī, who do otherwise provide a thorough coverage of events of the area under discussion.
57. Al-kāmil, IX, 63.
58. The events of 383/993 are the least well known of any year of Fāṭimid activity in northern Syria in the 380s/990s. No other source except Ibn Zāfir, al-Duwal, 32-33, reports of a Fāṭimid siege of Aleppo in that year. Al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 439-40, has Manjūtakīn attacking Apamea and Shaizar in that

year. But as Forsyth, op. cit., 489-90, has pointed out, al-Anṭakī has ignored the winter breaks of Manjūtakīn for this year. Therefore his dates of events at this time cannot be relied upon totally. Moreover, al-Maqrīzī, Ittiḥāz, I, 275, reports that Shaizar was taken by the Fāṭimids in the previous year. There is no indication in the sources that the Ḥamdānids had retrieved it after that.

59. Ittiḥāz, I, 277-8.
60. Ibid, 281.
61. Al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 440; Ittiḥāz, I, 281. When the Ḥamdānids appealed to Basil II to assist them against Fāṭimid forces, the latter instructed his governor at Antioch, Michael Burtzes, to go in aid of Aleppo. He also dispatched one of his generals, Leo Melissenos, to strengthen Burtzes' power.
62. Ibn al-Dawādārī, al-Durra, 235; Dhail, (Zakkar ed.), 70-1; al-Nujūm, II, 7-8; Ittiḥāz, I, 281; al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 440-1; Zubda, I, 189-90; Dhail Tajārib, III, 218-9, VI, 230-1.
63. Ittiḥāz, I, 283.
64. Ibid, 282.
65. Dhail, (Zakkar ed.), 72; al-Nujūm, II, 9; al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 441; Dhail Tajārib, III, 219-20, VI, 231-2; Zubda, I, 190. Ibn al-ʿAdīm saw some of these Fāṭimid fortifications in the seventh/thirteenth century.
66. Dhail (Zakkar ed.), 72; Ittiḥāz, I, 285; Dhail Tajārib, III, 220, VI, 232. Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Nujūm, II, 9, adds that once Antioch was taken, Constantinople itself would be threatened.
67. Dhail (Zakkar ed.), 72. For a slightly different version but with the same overall theme, see Dhail Tajārib, III, 220, VI, 232.
68. Al-Durra, 237; Dhail (Zakkar ed.), 72; Ittiḥāz, I, 285; Farag, op. cit., 245.
69. Ittiḥāz, I, 286; Dhail (Zakkar ed.), 72-3; al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 442, says that Manjūtakīn left on 1 Rabīʿ II/5 May; Zubda, I, 190-1.
70. As Aleppo was in such a state of depletion, Basil II returned to the Ḥamdānids two previous years' truce money that was payable to Byzantium. Cf. al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 442.



71. Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 286.
72. Dhail (Zakkar ed.) 73; al-Kāmil, IX, 31; al-Nujūm, II, 9.
73. Al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 442-3; Dhail Tajārib, III, 221, VI, 233; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Nujūm, II, 9, states that the Byzantine Emperor took ten thousand captives.
74. Dhail (Zakkar ed.), 73; Forsyth, op. cit., 494; Farag, op. cit., 246-8. Farag (246) has pointed out that the Byzantine administration recognized full well the significance of Tripoli. Thus it had been the target of the campaigns of Nikephorous II in 357-8/968, John I in 364-5/975 and Basil II in 385-6/995.
75. Dhail (Zakkar ed.), 71; this is corroborated by Dhail Tajārib, III, 219-20, VI, 231.
76. Al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 443; Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 286; Dhail (Zakkar ed.), 73; al-Nujūm, II, 9-10.
77. Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 286. Al-Maqrīzī calls the place Anṭarsūs; al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 443. Al-Anṭakī calls the place Anṭarṭūs.
78. Al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 443-4. For the various possible reasons for Michael Burtzes' dismissal see Forsyth, op. cit., 495.
79. Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 287; al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 447; al-Nujūm, II, 10; Dhail (Zakkar ed.), 73-4.
80. Ibn Muyassar, Ta'rīkh, 50; Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 287-4.
81. Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 288.
82. Ibid., I, 287.
83. Al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 444.
84. Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 290.
85. Al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 447; Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 290. Al-Maqrīzī in his Khīṭaṭ, II, 195, discusses at length the number of ships to be built, when some of them were launched, etc.
86. Both, al-Maqrīzī, (Itti<sup>ʿ</sup>āz, I, 290), who reports from al-Musabbihī - a historian contemporary to the events - and al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 447-8, give a detailed account of events that followed the fire.
87. On the role of the Amalfi traders in supplying Egypt with essentials such as timber, iron, etc. see Farag, op. cit., 250-1, and C. Cahen, "Les marchands étrangers sous les



Fatimides et les Ayyubides", Colloque, 97-101, particularly 98-9.

88. Al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 449; Ittiḥāz, I, 290; Khitat, II, 196.  
A. Lewis, Naval Power and Trade in the Mediterranean AD 500-1100 (Princeton, 1951), 191.
89. Al-Anṭakī, Ta'rīkh, 449-50.
90. Forsyth, op. cit., 497.

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## APPENDIX A

A collection of Arabic poetry composed on the Fāṭimid al-‘Azīz and by him.

[1] The original Arabic verses of Amīr Tamīm in praise of al-‘Azīz (Cf. Idrīs, *‘Uyūn*, VI, 207, 208-10).

[i]

ومنك في تهنئات عيدين  
بل زدت نورا على المنيرين  
بدر سماء وليث شبليين  
فيك و خلقا محمديين  
مبشرا مسهب الطريقين  
لهم ووعدا الى وعيدين  
عدّ يديه الندى يمينين

نحن من العيد اذا سلمت لنا  
برزت كالشمس يوم أسعدها  
كان في السرج منك منتصبا  
تاملوا من نبهم خلقا  
خوف بالله من جئت به  
تضم تحميدة الى عظة  
صلى عليك الاله من ملك

[ii]

فقد تمم الله آمالها  
يقينا ليحمل أحمالها  
قبيل الفطام وأوحى لها  
فالبسه الله سر بالها  
لأخرجت الأرض أثقالها  
يشد عراها وأقفالها  
ويضرب بالسيف خذالها  
وحج الحجيج و إلهالها

ليهن الإمامة ما نلتها  
لكانت ترأسه قبل دا  
وأوحى اليه بأمر الإله  
و زوّجه اليه بأمر الإله  
ولو ساسها أحد غيره  
فعاش العزيز لها سالما  
يعز على الدهر أنصارها  
به يقبل الله فرض الصيام

[2] Verses composed by an Egyptian poet contemporary to al-‘Azīz, Abū Naṣr Abd Allāh b. al-Huṣain al-Qairawānī (Cf. *Al-Kāmil*, IX, 82-3 and *Itti‘āz*, I, 298).

[i]

والماتني لنقض ذلك الامر

قل لابي نصر كاتب القصر

انقض عرى الملك الوزير  
واعط وامنع ، ولا تخف احدا ،  
وليس يدري ماذا يراد به ،  
تغز منه بحسن الشاء والذكر  
فصاحب القصر لينش في القصر  
و هو اذا درى فما يدري

[ii]

تتصر ، فالتنصر دين حق  
و قل بثلاثة عزوا و جلوا ،  
فيعقوب الوزير أب ، و هذا  
عليه زماننا هذا يدل  
وعطل ما سواهم فهو عطل  
العزیزابن ، وروح القدس فضل

[iii]

زيارجي نديم ، و كليسي وزير نعم ، على قدر الكلب يصلح الساجور

[3] A couplet by Ibn Killis addressed to al-'Azīz (Cf. al-Duwal, 30).

قل لامير المؤمنين الذي له العلى و المثل الثاقب  
طائر ك السابق لكنه لم يات إلا وله حاجب

[4] Verses recited by al-'Azīz at the death of one his sons. (Cf. Al-Nujūm, II,2; Wafayāt, III, 526 )

نحن بنو المصطفى ذوا محن  
عجيبه في الانام محنتنا  
يفرح هذا الودي بعيدهم  
يجرعها في الحياة كاظمنا  
أولنا مبتلى و خاتمنا  
طرا و أعيادنا ماتمنا



## APPENDIX B

Correspondence exchanged between the Fāṭimid Caliph al-ʿAzīz bil-lāh and his contemporary, the Būyid Amīr, ʿAḍud al-Dawla.

[i] The Arabic text of the letter that al-ʿAzīz wrote to ʿAḍud al-Dawla (Cf. *al-Nujūm*, II, 2, 13 - 14)

من عبد الله ووليه نزار ابي المنصور الامام العزيز بالله  
امير المؤمنين الى عضد الدولة الامام نصير ملة الاسلام ابي شجاع بن  
ابي علي ،

سلام عليك ،

فان أمير المؤمنين يحمد اليك الله الذي لا إله الا هو ويسأله  
الصلاة على جده محمد رسول رب العالمين و حجة الله على الخلق أجمعين  
صلاة باقية نامية متصلة دائمة بعترته الهادية وذريته الطيبة الطاهرة ،  
ويعد . فان رسولك وصل الى حضرة أمير المؤمنين مع  
الرسول المنفذ اليك فادى ما تحمله من اخلاصك في ولاء امير المؤمنين و  
مودتك و معرفتك بحق امامته ومحبتك لابائه الطائعين الهادين المهدين ، فسر  
امير المؤمنين بما سمعه عنك ووافقه ما كان يتوسمه منك و انك لا تعدل عن  
الحق . [ثم ذكر كلاما طويلا في المعنى الى ان قال ] وقد علمت ما جرى  
على ثغور المسلمين من المشركين و خراب الشام وضعف أهله و غلاء الاسعار  
و لو لا ذلك لتوجه أمير المؤمنين بنفسه الى الثغور و سوف يقدم الى الحيرة  
وكتابه يقدم عليك عن قريب فتاهب الى الجهاد في سبيل الله .

[ii] The Arabic text of the memo which ʿAḍud al-Dawla wrote to his envoy, Qādī Abū Muḥammad al-ʿUmmānī, who was to conduct negotiations at the Fāṭimid court. (Cf. Cahen, " Une correspondance", 93-5)

كان ابو الوليد عتبة بن الوليد أعزه الله ورد علينا وافدا عن تلك الحضرة

الشريفة حرسها الله متحملاً رسائل تعتقد بمثلها المودة و تستصفي بحكمها الثقة فاصحنا له واعتدنا بها ورأيناها صادرة عن فضل ظاهر و أصل في الكرم راسخ و فرع في الشرف نام ووجدنا ما تحمل من بذل على المودة ومقابلة على المسألة و ترغيب في المودعة مفضي اختيارنا وهمنا ومرمى اعتزامنا و رأينا منافسة على ذلك البيت الشريف و علما بما تجمعه هذه الخصائص من شمل اللفة و صلاح الكافة و حسم دواعي الفساد و الفرقة وأعدنا إبا الوليد أعزه الله الى تلك الحضرة المحروسة موصول الجناح بابن طرخان رسولنا و كان من حسن اللقاء له و وافي البر به و أكرم مورده ومصدره ما أتانا نباه وانطواه مقدور القضاء فيه دون المشافهة بما انقلب به وورد أبو الوليد أعزه الله خاليا مما كان مترقبا في صحبته من شاهد على الوفاء بالبذل و النجاز للوعد محيلا على تذكرة وكتاب تأملناهما فاشتملا على كل بر و فضل من دون ما اقتصته الرسالة الاولى مما اعتمدناه و ارتقبناه ووقفنا في الامرين بين شك و يقين و رأينا استئناف الامر وله استظهار بانهاضك أيها القاضي أيديك الله في صحبة أبي الوليد أعزه الله لتستبين ما خفي و تستوضح ما أشكل و تتجز ما بذل و تؤكد ما أسس و تعود ببيان فيما استدعي من سلم و خطب من ود وأثر عندنا من جميل ووعد به من بذل فسر على اسم الله وعونه و في ودائعه و ضمان كفايته . فاذا سهل الله وصولك الى تلك الحضرة الشريفة حرسها الله فلتلقها بالتحية و السلام و أورد ما شافهنالك به من شكر وعتداد وود و اعتقاد وشيعة بما حملناك و أبا الوليد أعزه الله من رسالتنا مؤديين حق الامانة فيها عالمين بما يكتنفكما من نجاح المطلب للحسنى من عادة الله عند من صدرتما عنه و للوثقى من عصمة الفضل لمن وردتما عليه و الله يوفقكما ويسددكما بمنه .

فاما ما أشير اليه من أمر الجهاد لاعداء الله الروم فمن فرائض الله التي صرف اليها عزيمنتنا و وكل فيها نيتنا بحكم ما منحناه عز و جل من القدرة و أفادنا من العز والبسطة و البأس والشدة و العتاد والعدة و نحن نستعين الله على النية فيها . اذا انصرفت عن تلك الحضرة حرسها الله بما يقتضيه شرائط المودة و موجبات الثقة و قضايا الجميل على المودعة و كان وقت الغزو رجونا الانتقام بمواقفنا في جهاد المشركين قدم بمعونة الله . و اما الدعاة فيمضون الا أن المنصوص عليه بالبصرة تجاوز ما جاز

الى ما لم يجز فمنع من التبسط و قد رسمنا الان اصابه الى حضرتنا ليحل  
 كنف الصيانة الى أن يتيسر انصرافك على المراد فتجري أمره وأمر أشكاله  
 على سنن الصواب .

وأما العقيلي فافكه فيما ادعى ظاهر و انتماءه الى جملتنا زور و مثله  
 بالاقصاء والاملاح حقيق فاستصحبه في عودك .

و أما الهجريون أدام الله عزهم فالوفاء لهم بما وعدوا به واجب إذ كان  
 من أصول الشرط و داخل في أحكام الود .

فأورد أيّدك الله ذلك و قدم الانصراف بالجواب إن شاء الله.